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COUSIN HENRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE "CARMARTHEN HERALD."

THERE was a great deal said at Carmarthen about the old Squire's will. Such scenes as that which had taken place in the house, first when the will was produced, then when the search was made, and afterwards when the will was read, do not pass without comment. There had been many present, and some of them had been much moved by the circumstances. The feeling that the Squire had executed a will subsequent to that which had now been proved was very strong, and

the idea suggested by Mr. Apjohn that the Squire himself had, in the weakness of his latter moments, destroyed this document, was not generally accepted. Had he done so, something of it would have been known. The ashes of the paper or the tattered fragments would have been seen. Whether Mr. Apjohn himself did or did not believe that it had been so, others would not think it. Among the tenants and the servants at Llanfeare there was a general feeling that something wrong had been done. They who were most inclined to be charitable in their judgment, such as John Griffith of Coed, thought that the document was still hidden, and that it might not improbably be brought to light at last. Others were convinced that it had fallen into the hands of the present possessor of the property, and that it had been feloniously but successfully destroyed No guess at the real truth was made by any one. How should a man have guessed that the false heir should have sat there with the will,

as it were, before his eyes, close at his hand, and neither have destroyed nor revealed its existence?

Among those who believed the worst as to Cousin Henry were the two Cantors. When a man has seen a thing done himself he is prone to believe in it,—and the more so when he has had a hand in the doing. They had been selected for the important operation of witnessing the will, and did not in the least doubt that the will had been in existence when the old Squire died. It might have been destroyed since. They believed that it had been destroyed. But they could not be brought to understand that so great an injustice should be allowed to remain on the face of the earth without a remedy or without punishment. Would it not be enough for a judge to know that they, two respectable men, had witnessed a new will, and that this new will had certainly been in opposition to the one which had been so fraudulently proved? The younger Cantor especially

was loud upon the subject, and got many ears in Carmarthen to listen to him.

The Carmarthen Herald, a newspaper bearing a high character throughout South Wales, took the matter up very strongly, so that it became a question whether the new Squire would not be driven to defend himself by an action for libel. It was not that the writer declared that Cousin Henry had destroyed the will, but that he published minute accounts of all that had been done at Llanfeare, putting forward in every paper as it came out the reason which existed for supposing that a wrong had been done. That theory that old Indefer Jones had himself destroyed his last will without saying a word of his purpose to any one was torn to tatters. The doctor had been with him from day to day, and must almost certainly have known it had such an intention been in his mind. The housekeeper would have known it. Henry Jones himself must have known it. The nephew and professed heir had said not a word to any one of

what had passed between himself and his uncle. Could they who had known old Indefer Jones for so many years, and were aware that he had been governed by the highest sense of honour through his entire life, could they bring themselves to believe that he should have altered the will made in his nephew's favour, and then realtered it, going back to his intentions in that nephew's favour, without saying a word to his nephew on the subject? But Henry Jones had given no account of any such word. Henry Jones had been silent as to all that occurred during those last weeks. Henry Jones had not only been silent when the will was being read, when the search was being made, but had sat there still in continued silence. "We do not say," continued the writer in the paper, "that Henry Jones since he became owner of Llanfeare has been afraid to mingle with his brother men. We have no right to say so. But we consider it to be our duty to declare that such has been

the fact. Circumstances will from time to time occur in which it becomes necessary on public grounds to inquire into the privacy of individuals, and we think that the circumstances now as to this property are of this nature." As will be the case in such matters, these expressions became gradually stronger, till it was conceived to be the object of those concerned in making them to drive Henry Jones to seek for legal redress,—so that he might be subjected to cross-examination as to the transactions and words of that last fortnight before his uncle's death. It was the opinion of many that if he could be forced into a witness-box, he would be made to confess if there were anything to confess. The cowardice of the man became known,—or was rather exaggerated in the minds of those around him. It was told of him how he lived in the one room, how rarely he left the house, how totally he was without occupation. More than the truth was repeated as to his habits, till all Car-

marthenshire believed that he was so trammelled by some mysterious consciousness of crime as to be unable to perform any of the duties of life. When men spoke to him he trembled; when men looked at him he turned away.

All his habits were inquired into. It was said of him that the Carmarthen Herald was the only paper that he saw, and declared of him that he spent hour after hour in spelling the terrible accusations which, if not absolutely made against him, were insinuated. It became clear to lawyers, to Mr. Apjohn himself, that the man, if honest, should, on behalf of the old family and long-respected name, vindicate himself by prosecuting the owner of the paper for libel. If he were honest in the matter, altogether honest, there could be no reason why he should fear to encounter a hostile lawyer. There were at last two letters from young Joseph Cantor printed in the paper which were undoubtedly libellous,—letters which

young Cantor himself certainly could not have written,—letters which all Carmarthen knew to have been written by some one connected with the newspaper, though signed by the young farmer,—in which it was positively declared that the old Squire had left a later will behind him. When it was discussed whether or no he could get a verdict, it was clearly shown that the getting of a verdict should not be the main object of the prosecution. "He has to show," said Mr. Apjohn, "that he is not afraid to face a court of justice."

But he was afraid. When we last parted with him after his visit to Coed he had not seen the beginning of these attacks. On the next day the first paper reached him, and they who were concerned in it did not spare to send him the copies as they were issued. Having read the first, he was not able to refuse to read what followed. In each issue they were carried on, and, as was told of him in Carmarthen, he lingered over every agonizing detail

of the venom which was entering into his soul. It was in vain that he tried to hide the paper, or to pretend to be indifferent to its coming. Mrs. Griffith knew very well where the paper was, and knew also that every word had been perused. The month's notice which had been accepted from her and the butler in lieu of the three months first offered had now expired. The man had gone, but she remained, as did the two other women. Nothing was said as to the cause of their remaining; but they remained. As for Cousin Henry himself, he was too weak, too frightened, too completely absorbed by the horrors of his situation to ask them why they stayed, or to have asked them why they went.

He understood every word that was written of him with sharp, minute intelligence. Though his spirit was cowed, his mind was still alive to all the dangers of his position. Things were being said of him, charges were insinuated, which he declared to himself to be false. He

had not destroyed the will. He had not even hidden it. He had only put a book into its own place, carrying out as he did so his innocent intention when he had first lifted the book. When these searchers had come, doing their work so idly, with such incurious futility, he had not concealed the book. He had left it there on its shelf beneath their hands. Who could say that he had been guilty? If the will were found now, who could reasonably suggest that there had been guilt on his part? If all were known,—except that chance glance of his eye which never could be known,—no one could say that he was other than innocent! And yet he knew of himself that he would lack strength to stand up in court and endure the sharp questions and angry glances of a keen lawyer. His very knees would fail to carry him through the court. The words would stick in his jaws. He would shake and shiver and faint before the assembled eyes. It would be easier

for him to throw himself from the rocks on which he had lain dreaming into the sea than to go into a court of law and there tell his own story as to the will. They could not force him to go. He thought he could perceive as much as that. The action, if action there were to be, must originate with him. There was no evidence on which they could bring a charge of felony or even of fraud against him. They could not drag him into the court. But he knew that all the world would say that if he were an honest man, he himself would appear there, denounce his defamers, and vindicate his own name. As day by day he failed to do so, he would be declaring his own guilt. Yet he knew that he could not do it.

Was there no escape? He was quite sure now that the price at which he held the property was infinitely above its value. Its value! It had no value in his eyes. It was simply a curse

of which he would rid himself with the utmost alacrity if only he could rid himself of all that had befallen him in achieving it. But how should he escape? Were he now himself to disclose the document and carry it into Carmarthen, prepared to deliver up the property to his cousin, was there one who would not think that it had been in his possession from before his uncle's death, and that he had now been driven by his fears to surrender it? Was there one who would not believe that he had hidden it with his own hands? How now could he personate that magnanimity which would have been so easy had he brought forth the book and handed it with its enclosure to Mr. Apjohn when the lawyer came to read the will?

He looked back with dismay at his folly at having missed an opportunity so glorious. But now there seemed to be no escape. Though he left the room daily, no one found the will. They were welcome to

find it if they would, but they did not. That base newspaper lied of him,—as he told himself bitterly as he read it,—in saying that he did not leave his room. Daily did he roam about the place for an hour or two,—speaking, indeed, to no one, looking at no one. There the newspaper had been true enough. But that charge against him of self-imprisonment had been false as far as it referred to days subsequent to the rebuke which his housekeeper had given him. But no one laid a hand upon the book. He almost believed that, were the paper left open on the table, no eye would examine its contents. There it lay still hidden within the folds of the sermon, that weight upon his heart, that incubus on his bosom, that nightmare which robbed him of all his slumbers, and he could not rid himself of its presence. Property, indeed! Oh! if he were only back in London, and his cousin reigning at Llanfeare!

John Griffith, from Coed, had promised to

call upon him; but when three weeks had passed by, he had not as yet made his appearance. Now, on one morning he came and found his landlord alone in the book-room. "This is kind of you, Mr. Griffith," said Cousin Henry, struggling hard to assume the manner of a man with a light heart.

"I have come, Mr. Jones," said the farmer very seriously, "to say a few words which I think ought to be said."

"What are they, Mr. Griffith?"

"Now, Mr. Jones, I am not a man as is given to interfering,—especially not with my betters."

"I am sure you are not."

"And, above all, not with my own landlord." Then he paused; but as Cousin Henry could not find an appropriate word either for rebuke or encouragement, he was driven to go on with his story. "I have been obliged to look at

all those things in the Carmarthen Herald." Then Cousin Henry turned deadly pale. "We have all been driven to look at them. I have taken the paper these twenty years, but it is sent now to every tenant on the estate, whether they pay or whether they don't. Mrs. Griffith, there, in the kitchen has it. I suppose they sent it to you, sir?"

"Yes; it does come," said Cousin Henry, with the faintest attempt at a smile.

"And you have read what they say?"

"Yes, the most of it."

"It has been very hard, sir." At this Cousin Henry could only affect a ghastly smile. "Very hard," continued the farmer. "It has made my flesh creep as I read it. Do you know what it all means, Mr. Jones?"

"I suppose I know."

"It means,—that you have stolen,—the estates,—from your cousin,—Miss Brodrick!" This the man said very solemnly, bringing out

each single word by itself. "I am not saying so, Mr. Jones."

"No, no, no," gasped the miserable wretch.

"No, indeed. If I thought so, I should not be here to tell you what I thought. It is because I believe that you are injured that I am here."

"I am injured; I am injured!"

"I think so. I believe so. I cannot tell what the mystery is, if mystery there be; but I do not believe that you have robbed that young lady, your own cousin, by destroying such a deed as your uncle's will."

"No, no, no."

"Is there any secret that you can tell?"

Awed, appalled, stricken with utter dismay, Cousin Henry sat silent before his questioner.

"If there be, sir, had you not better confide it to some one? Your uncle knew me well for more than forty years, and trusted me thoroughly, and I would fain, if I could, do

something for his nephew. If there be anything to tell, tell it like a man."

Still Cousin Henry sat silent. He was unable to summon courage at the instant sufficient to deny the existence of the secret, nor could he resolve to take down the book and show the document. He doubted, when the appearance of a doubt was in itself evidence of guilt in the eyes of the man who was watching him. "Oh, Mr. Griffith," he exclaimed after a while, "will you be my friend?"

"I will indeed, Mr. Jones, if I can,—honestly."

"I have been cruelly used."

"It has been hard to bear," said Mr. Griffith.

"Terrible, terrible! Cruel, cruel!" Then again he paused, trying to make up his mind, endeavouring to see by what means he could escape from this hell upon earth. If there were any means, he might perhaps achieve it by aid of this man. The man

sat silent, watching him, but the way of escape did not appear to him.

"There is no mystery," he gasped at last.

"None?" said the farmer severely.

"No mystery. What mystery should there be? There was the will. I have destroyed nothing. I have hidden nothing. I have done nothing. Because the old man changed his mind so often, am I to be blamed?"

"Then, Mr. Jones, why do you not say all that in a court of law,—on your oath?"

"How can I do that?"

"Go to Mr. Apjohn, and speak to him like a man. Bid him bring an action in your name for libel against the newspaper. Then there will be an inquiry. Then you will be put into a witness-box, and be able to tell your own story on your oath."

Cousin Henry, groaning, pale and affrighted, murmured out something signifying that he would think of it. Then Mr. Griffith left him. The farmer, when he entered the

room, had believed his landlord to be innocent, but that belief had vanished when he took his leave.

CHAPTER II.

AN ACTION FOR LIBEL.

When the man had asked him that question, —Is there any secret you can tell?—Cousin Henry did, for half a minute, make up his mind to tell the whole story, and reveal everything as it had occurred. Then he remembered the lie which he had told, the lie to which he had signed his name when he had been called upon to prove the will in Carmarthen. Had he not by the unconsidered act of that moment committed some crime for which he could be prosecuted and sent to gaol? Had it not been perjury? From the very beginning he had determined that he would support his possession of the property by no

criminal deed. He had not hidden the will in the book. He had not interfered in the search. He had done nothing incompatible with innocence. So it had been with him till he had been called upon, without a moment having been allowed to him for thinking, to sign his name to that declaration. The remembrance of this came to him as he almost made up his mind to rise from his seat and pull the book down from the shelf. And then another thought occurred to him. Could he not tell Mr. Griffith that he had discovered the document since he had made that declaration,—that he had discovered it only on that morning? But he had felt that a story such as that would receive no belief, and he had feared to estrange his only friend by a palpable lie. He had therefore said that there was no secret,—had said so after a pause which had assured Mr. Griffith of the existence of a mystery,—had said so with a face which of itself had declared the truth.

When the farmer left him he knew well enough that the man doubted him,—nay, that the man was assured of his guilt. It had come to be so with all whom he had encountered since he had first reached Llanfeare. His uncle who had sent for him had turned from him; his cousin had scorned him; the tenants had refused to accept him when there certainly had been no cause for their rejection. Mr. Apjohn from the first had looked at him with accusing eyes; his servants were spies upon his actions; this newspaper was rending his very vitals; and now this one last friend had deserted him. He thought that if only he could summon courage for the deed, it would be best for him to throw himself from the rocks.

But there was no such courage in him. The one idea remaining to him was to save himself from the horrors of a criminal prosecution. If he did not himself touch the document, or give any sign of his consciousness of its pre-

sence, they could not prove that he had known of its whereabouts. If they would only find it and let him go! But they did not find it, and he could not put them on its trace. As to these wicked libels, Mr. Griffith had asked him why he did not have recourse to a court of law, and refute them by the courage of his presence. He understood the proposition in all its force. Why did he not show himself able to bear any questions which the ingenuity of a lawyer could put to him? Simply because he was unable to bear them. The truth would be extracted from him in the process. Though he should have fortified himself with strongest resolves, he would be unable to hide his guilty knowledge. He knew that of himself. He would be sure to give testimony against himself, on the strength of which he would be dragged from the witness-box to the dock.

He declared to himself that, let the newspaper say what it would, he would not of his

own motion throw himself among the lion's teeth which were prepared for him. But in so resolving he did not know what further external force might be applied to him. When the old tenant had sternly told him that he should go like a man into the witness-box and tell his own story on his oath, that had been hard to bear. But there came worse than that,—a power more difficult to resist. On the following morning Mr. Apjohn arrived at Llanfeare, having driven himself over from Carmarthen, and was at once shown into the book-room. The lawyer was a man who, by his friends and by his clients in general, was considered to be a pleasant fellow as well as a cautious man of business. He was good at a dinner-table, serviceable with a gun, and always happy on horseback. He could catch a fish, and was known to be partial to a rubber at whist. He certainly was not regarded as a hard or cruel man. But Cousin Henry, in looking at him, had always seen a

sternness in his eye, some curve of a frown upon his brow, which had been uncomfortable to him. From the beginning of their intercourse he had been afraid of the lawyer. He had felt that he was looked into and scrutinized, and found to be wanting. Mr. Apjohn had, of course, been on Isabel's side. All Carmarthenshire knew that he had done his best to induce the old squire to maintain Isabel as his heiress. Cousin Henry was well aware of that. But still why had this attorney always looked at him with accusing eyes? When he had signed that declaration at Carmarthen, the attorney had shown by his face that he believed the declaration to be false. And now this man was there, and there was nothing for him but to endure his questions.

"Mr. Jones," said the lawyer, "I have thought it my duty to call upon you in respect to these articles in the Carmarthen Herald."

"I cannot help what the Carmarthen Herald may say."

"But you can, Mr. Jones. That is just it. There are laws which enable a man to stop libels and to punish them if it be worth his while to do so." He paused a moment, but Cousin Henry was silent, and he continued, "For many years I was your uncle's lawyer, as was my father before me. I have never been commissioned by you to regard myself as your lawyer, but as circumstances are at present, I am obliged to occupy the place until you put your business into other hands. In such a position I feel it to be my duty to call upon you in reference to these articles. No doubt they are libellous."

"They are very cruel; I know that," said Cousin Henry, whining.

"All such accusations are cruel, if they be false."

"These are false; damnably false."

"I take that for granted; and therefore I

have come to you to tell you that it is your duty to repudiate with all the strength of your own words the terrible charges which are brought against you."

"Must I go and be a witness about myself?"

"Yes; it is exactly that. You must go and be a witness about yourself. Who else can tell the truth as to all the matters in question as well as yourself? You should understand, Mr. Jones, that you should not take this step with the view of punishing the newspaper."

"Why, then?"

"In order that you may show yourself willing to place yourself there to be questioned. 'Here I am,' you would say. 'If there be any point in which you wish me to be examined as to this property and this will, here I am to answer you.' It is that you may show that you are not afraid of investigation." But it was exactly this of which Cousin Henry was

afraid. "You cannot but be aware of what is going on in Carmarthen."

"I know about the newspaper."

"It is my duty not to blink the matter. Every one, not only in the town but throughout the country, is expressing an opinion that right has not been done."

"What do they want? I cannot help it if my uncle did not make a will according to their liking."

"They think that he did make a will according to their liking, and that there has been foul play."

"Do they accuse me?"

"Practically they do. These articles in the paper are only an echo of the public voice. And that voice is becoming stronger and stronger every day because you take no steps to silence it. Have you seen yesterday's paper?"

"Yes; I saw it," said Cousin Henry, gasping for breath.

Then Mr. Apjohn brought a copy of the newspaper out of his pocket, and began to read a list of questions which the editor was supposed to ask the public generally. Each question was an insult, and Cousin Henry, had he dared, would have bade the reader desist, and have turned him out of the room for his insolence in reading them.

"Has Mr. Henry Jones expressed an opinion of his own as to what became of the will which the Messrs. Cantor witnessed?"

"Has Mr. Henry Jones consulted any friend, legal or otherwise, as to his tenure of the Llanfeare estate?"

"Has Mr. Henry Jones any friend to whom he can speak in Carmarthenshire?"

"Has Mr. Henry Jones inquired into the cause of his own isolation?"

"Has Mr. Henry Jones any idea why we persecute him in every fresh issue of our newspaper?"

"Has Mr. Henry Jones thought of what may possibly be the end of all this?"

"Has Mr. Henry Jones any thought of prosecuting us for libel?"

"Has Mr. Henry Jones heard of any other case in which an heir has been made so little welcome to his property?"

So the questions went on, an almost endless list, and the lawyer read them one after another, in a low, plain voice, slowly, but with clear accentuation, so that every point intended by the questioner might be understood. Such a martyrdom surely no man was ever doomed to bear before. In every line he was described as a thief. Yet he bore it; and when the lawyer came to an end of the abominable questions, he sat silent, trying to smile. What was he to say?

"Do you mean to put up with that?" asked Mr. Apjohn, with that curve of his eyebrow of which Cousin Henry was so much afraid.

"What am I to do?"

"Do! Do anything rather than sit in silence and bear such injurious insult as that. Were there nothing else to do, I would tear the man's tongue from his mouth,—or at least his pen from his grasp."

"How am I to find him? I never did do anything of that rough kind."

"It is not necessary. I only say what a man would do if there were nothing else to be done. But the step to be taken is easy. Instruct me to go before the magistrates at Carmarthen, and indict the paper for libel. That is what you must do."

There was an imperiousness in the lawyer's tone which was almost irresistible. Nevertheless Cousin Henry made a faint effort at resisting. "I should be dragged into a lawsuit."

"A lawsuit! Of course you would. What lawsuit would not be preferable to that? You must do as I bid you, or you must consent to have it said and have it thought by all the

country that you have been guilty of some felony, and have filched your cousin's property."

"I have committed nothing," said the poor wretch, as the tears ran down his face.

"Then go and say so before the world," said the attorney, dashing his fist down violently upon the table. "Go and say so, and let men hear you, instead of sitting here whining like a woman. Like a woman! What honest woman would ever bear such insult? If you do not, you will convince all the world, you will convince me and every neighbour you have, that you have done something to make away with that will. In that case we will not leave a stone unturned to discover the truth. The editor of that paper is laying himself open purposely to an action in order that he may force you to undergo the cross-questioning of a barrister, and everybody who hears of it says that he is right. You can prove that

he is wrong only by accepting the challenge. If you refuse the challenge, as I put it to you now, you will acknowledge that—that you have done this deed of darkness!"

Was there any torment ever so cruel, ever so unjustifiable as this! He was asked to put himself, by his own act, into the thumbscrew, on the rack, in order that the executioner might twist his limbs and tear out his vitals! He was to walk into a court of his own accord that he might be worried like a rat by a terrier, that he might be torn by the practised skill of a professional tormenter, that he might be forced to give up the very secrets of his soul in his impotence;—or else to live amidst the obloquy of all men. He asked himself whether he had deserved it, and in that moment of time he assured himself that he had not deserved such punishment as this. If not altogether innocent, if not white as snow, he had done nothing worthy of such cruel usage.

"Well," said Mr. Apjohn, as though demanding a final answer to his proposition.

"I will think of it," gasped Cousin Henry.

"There must be no more thinking. The time has gone by for thinking. If you will give me your instructions to commence proceedings against the Carmarthen Herald, I will act as your lawyer. If not, I shall make it known to the town that I have made this proposition to you; and I shall also make known the way in which it has been accepted. There has been more than delay enough."

He sobbed, and gasped, and struggled with himself as the lawyer sat and looked at him. The one thing on which he had been intent was the avoiding of a court of law. And to this he was now to bring himself by his own act.

"When would it have to be?" he asked.

"I should go before the magistrates to-

morrow. Your presence would not be wanted then. No delay would be made by the other side. They would be ready enough to come to trial. The assizes begin here at Carmarthen on the 29th of next month. You might probably be examined on that day, which will be a Friday, or on the Saturday following. You will be called as a witness on your own side to prove the libel. But the questions asked by your own counsel would amount to nothing."

"Nothing!" exclaimed Cousin Henry.

"You would be there for another purpose," continued the lawyer. "When that nothing had been asked, you would be handed over to the other side, in order that the object of the proceedings might be attained."

"What object?"

"How the barrister employed might put it I cannot say, but he would examine you as to any knowledge you may have as to that missing will."

Mr. Apjohn, as he said this, paused for a full minute, looking his client full in the face. It was as though he himself were carrying on a cross-examination. "He would ask you whether you have such knowledge." Then again he paused, but Cousin Henry said nothing. "If you have no such knowledge, if you have no sin in that matter on your conscience, nothing to make you grow pale before the eyes of a judge, nothing to make you fear the verdict of a jury, no fault heavy on your own soul,—then you may answer him with frank courage, then you may look him in the face, and tell him with a clear voice that as far as you are aware your property is your own by as fair a title as any in the country."

In every word of this there had been condemnation. It was as though Mr. Apjohn were devoting him to infernal torture, telling him that his only escape would be by the exercise of some herculean power which was notoriously beyond his reach. It was evident to

him that Mr. Apjohn was alluring him on with the object of ensuring, not his escape, but most calamitous defeat. Mr. Apjohn had come there under the guise of his adviser and friend, but was in fact leagued with all the others around him to drive him to his ruin. Of that he felt quite sure. The voice, the eyes, the face, every gesture of his unwelcome visitor had told him that it was so. And yet he could not rise in indignation and expel the visitor from his house. There was a cruelty, an inhumanity, in this which to his thinking was infinitely worse than any guilt of his own. "Well?" said Mr. Apjohn.

"I suppose it must be so."

"I have your instructions, then?"

"Don't you hear me say that I suppose it must be so."

"Very well. The matter shall be brought in proper course before the magistrates tomorrow, and if, as I do not doubt, an injunction be granted, I will proceed with the matter

at once. I will tell you whom we select as our counsel at the assizes, and, as soon as I have learnt, will let you know whom they employ. Let me only implore you not only to tell the truth as to what you know, but to tell all the truth. If you attempt to conceal anything, it will certainly be dragged out of you."

Having thus comforted his client, Mr. Apjohn took his leave.

CHAPTER III.

COUSIN HENRY MAKES ANOTHER ATTEMPT.

When Mr. Apjohn had gone, Cousin Henry sat for an hour, not thinking,—men so afflicted have generally lost the power to think,—but paralyzed by the weight of his sorrow, simply repeating to himself assertions that said no man had ever been used so cruelly. Had he been as other men are, he would have turned that lawyer out of the house at the first expression of an injurious suspicion, but his strength had not sufficed for such action. He confessed to himself his own weakness, though he could not bring himself to confess his own guilt. Why did they not find it and have done with it? Feeling at last how incapable

he was of collecting his thoughts while he sat there in the book-room, and aware, at the same time, that he must determine on some course of action, he took his hat and strolled out towards the cliffs.

There was a month remaining to him, just a month before the day named on which he was to put himself into the witness-box. That, at any rate, must be avoided. He did after some fashion resolve that, let the result be what it might, he would not submit himself to a cross-examination. They could not drag him from his bed were he to say that he was ill. They could not send policemen to find him, were he to hide himself in London. Unless he gave evidence against himself as to his own guilty knowledge, they could bring no open charge against him; or if he could but summon courage to throw himself from off the rocks, then, at any rate, he would escape from their hands.

What was it all about? This he asked him-

self as he sat some way down the cliff, looking out over the sea. What was it all about? If they wanted the property for his Cousin Isabel, they were welcome to take it. He desired nothing but to be allowed to get away from this accursed country, to escape, and never more to be heard of there or to hear of it. Could he not give up the property with the signing of some sufficient deed, and thus put an end to their cruel clamour? He could do it all without any signing, by a simple act of honesty, by taking down the book with the will and giving it at once to the lawyer! It was possible,—possible as far as the knowledge of any one but himself was concerned,—that such a thing might be done not only with honesty, but with high-minded magnanimity. How would it be if in truth the document were first found by him on this very day? Had it been so, were it so, then his conduct would be honest. And it was still open to him to simulate that it was so. He had taken down the

book, let him say, for spiritual comfort in his great trouble, and lo, the will had been found there between the leaves! No one would believe him. He declared to himself that such was already his character in the county that no one would believe him. But what though they disbelieved him? Surely they would accept restitution without further reproach. Then there would be no witness-box, no savage terrier of a barrister to tear him in pieces with his fierce words and fiercer eyes. Whether they believed him or not, they would let him go. It would be told of him, at any rate, that having the will in his hands, he had not destroyed it. Up in London, where men would not know all the details of this last miserable month, some good would be spoken of him. And then there would be time left to him to relieve his conscience by repentance.

But to whom should he deliver up the will, and how should he frame the words? He was

conscious of his own impotence in deceit. For such a purpose Mr. Apjohn, no doubt, would be the proper person, but there was no one of whom he stood so much in dread as of Mr. Apjohn. Were he to carry the book and the paper to the lawyer and attempt to tell his story, the real truth would be drawn out from him in the first minute of their interview. The man's eyes looking at him, the man's brow bent against him, would extract from him instantly the one truth which it was his purpose to hold within his own keeping. He would find no thankfulness, no mercy, not even justice in the lawyer. The lawyer would accept restitution, and would crush him afterwards. Would it not be better to go off to Hereford, without saying a word to any one in Carmarthenshire, and give up the deed to his Cousin Isabel? But then she had scorned him. She had treated him with foul contempt. As he feared Mr. Apjohn, so did he hate his Cousin Isabel. The only approach to manli-

less left in his bosom was a true hatred of his cousin.

The single voice which had been kind to him since he had come to this horrid place had been that of old Farmer Griffith. Even his voice had been stern at last, but yet, with the sternness, there had been something of compassion. He thought that he could tell the tale to Mr. Griffith, if to any one. And so thinking, he resolved at once to go to Coed. There was still before him that other means of escape which the rocks and the sea afforded him. As he had made his way on this morning to the spot on which he was now lying that idea was still present to him. He did not think that he could do a deed of such daring. He was almost sure of himself that the power of doing it would be utterly wanting when the moment came. But still it was present to his mind. The courage might reach him at the instant. Were a sudden impulse to carry him away, he thought the Lord would surely for-

give him because of all his sufferings. But now, as he looked at the spot, and saw that he could throw himself only among the rocks, that he could not reach the placid deep water, he considered it again, and remembered that the Lord would not forgive him a sin as to which there would be no moment for repentance. As he could not escape in that way, he must carry out his purpose with Farmer Griffith.

"So you be here again prowling about on father's lands?"

Cousin Henry knew at once the voice of that bitter enemy of his, young Cantor; and, wretched as he was, he felt also something of the spirit of the landlord in being thus rebuked for trespassing on his own ground. "I suppose I have a right to walk about on my own estate?" said he.

"I know nothing about your own estate," replied the farmer's son. "I say nothin' about that. They do be talking about it, but I say nothin'. I has my own opinions, but I

say nothin'. Others do be saying a great deal, as I suppose you hear, Mr. Jones, but I say nothin'."

"How dare you be so impudent to your landlord?"

"I know nothin' about landlords. I know father has a lease of this land, and pays his rent, whether you get it or another; and you have no more right, it's my belief, to intrude here nor any other stranger. So, if you please, you'll walk."

"I shall stay here just as long as it suits me," said Cousin Henry.

"Oh, very well. Then father will have his action against you for trespass, and so you'll be brought into a court of law. You are bound to go off when you are warned. You ain't no right here because you call yourself landlord. You come up here and I'll thrash you, that's what I will. You wouldn't dare show yourself before a magistrate, that's what you wouldn't."

The young man stood there for a while waiting, and then walked off with a loud laugh.

Any one might insult him, any one might beat him, and he could seek for no redress because he would not dare to submit himself to the ordeal of a witness-box. All those around him knew that it was so. He was beyond the protection of the law because of the misery of his position. It was clear that he must do something, and as he could not drown himself, there was nothing better than that telling of his tale to Mr. Griffith. He would go to Mr. Griffith at once. He had not the book and the document with him, but perhaps he could tell the tale better without their immediate presence.

At Coed he found the farmer in his own farmyard.

"I have come to you in great touble," said Cousin Henry, beginning his story.

"Well, squire, what is it?" Then the farmer seated himself on a low, movable bar

which protected the entrance into an open barn, and Cousin Henry sat beside him.

"That young man Cantor insulted me grossly just now."

"He shouldn't have done that. Whatever comes of it all, he shouldn't have done that. He was always a forward young puppy."

"I do think I have been treated very badly among you."

"As to that, Mr. Jones, opinion does run very high about the squire's will. I explained to you all that when I was with you yesterday."

"Something has occurred since that,—something that I was coming on purpose to tell you."

"What has occurred?" Cousin Henry groaned terribly as the moment for revelation came upon him. And he felt that he had made the moment altogether unfit for revelation by that ill-judged observation as to young Cantor. He should have rushed at his

story at once. "Oh, Mr. Griffith, I have found the will!" It should have been told after that fashion. He felt it now,—felt that he had allowed the opportunity to slip by him.

"What is it that has occurred, Mr. Jones, since I was up at Llanfeare yesterday?"

"I don't think that I could tell you here."

"Where, then?"

"Nor yet to-day. That young man, Cantor, has so put me out that I hardly know what I am saying."

"Couldn't you speak it out, sir, if it's just something to be said?"

"It's something to be shown too," replied Cousin Henry, "and if you wouldn't mind coming up to the house to-morrow, or next day, then I could explain it all."

"To-morrow it shall be," said the farmer. "On the day after I shall be in Carmarthen to market. If eleven o'clock to-morrow morning won't be too early, I shall be there, sir."

One, or three, or five o'clock would have

been better, or the day following better still, so that the evil hour might have been postponed. But Cousin Henry assented to the proposition and took his departure. Now he had committed himself to some revelation, and the revelation must be made. He felt acutely the folly of his own conduct during the last quarter of an hour. If it might have been possible to make the old man believe that the document had only been that morning found, such belief could only have been achieved by an impulsive telling of the story. He was aware that at every step he took he created fresh difficulties by his own folly and want of foresight. How could he now act the sudden emotion of a man startled by surprise? Nevertheless, he must go on with his scheme. There was now nothing before him but his scheme. The farmer would not believe him; but still he might be able to achieve that purpose which he had in view of escaping from Llanfeare and Carmarthenshire.

He sat up late that night thinking of it. For many days past he had not touched the volume, or allowed his eye to rest upon the document. He had declared to himself that it might remain there or be taken away, as it might chance to others. It should no longer be anything to him. For aught that he knew, it might already have been removed. Such had been his resolution during the last fortnight, and in accordance with that he had acted. But now his purpose was again changed. Now he intended to reveal the will with his own hands, and it might be well that he should see that it was there.

He took down the book, and there it was. He opened it out, and carefully read through every word of its complicated details. For it had been arranged and drawn out in a lawyer's office, with all the legal want of punctuation and unintelligible phraseology. It had been copied verbatim by the old Squire, and was no doubt a properly binding and effective will.

Never before had he dwelt over it so tediously. He had feared lest a finger-mark, a blot, or a spark might betray his acquaintance with the deed. But now he was about to give it up and let all the world know that it had been in his hands. He felt, therefore, that he was entitled to read it, and that there was no longer ground to fear any accident. Though the women in the house should see him reading it, what matter?

Thrice he read it, sitting there late into the night. Thrice he read the deed which had been prepared with such devilish industry to rob him of the estate which had been promised him! If he had been wicked to conceal it,—no, not to conceal it, but only to be silent as to its whereabouts,—how much greater had been the sin of that dying old man who had taken so much trouble in robbing him? Now that the time had come, almost the hour in which he was about to surrender the property which he had lately so truly loathed, there came again

upon him a love of money, a feeling of the privilege which attached to him as an owner of broad acres, and a sudden remembrance that with a little courage, with a little perseverance, with a little power of endurance, he might live down the evils of the present day. When he thought of what it might be to be Squire of Llanfeare in perhaps five years time, with the rents in his pocket, he became angry at his own feebleness. Let them ask him what questions they would, there could be no evidence against him. If he were to burn the will, there could certainly be no evidence against him. If the will were still hidden, they might, perhaps, extract that secret from him; but no lawyer would be strong enough to make him own that he had thrust the paper between the bars of the fire.

He sat looking at it, gnashing his teeth together, and clenching his fists. If only he dared to do it! If only he could do it! He did during a moment, make up his mind; but had

no sooner done so than there rose clearly before his mind's eye the judge and the jury, the paraphernalia of the court, and all the long horrors of a prison life. Even now those prying women might have their eyes turned upon what he was doing. And should there be no women prying, no trial, no conviction, still there would be the damning guilt on his own soul,—a guilt which would admit of no repentance except by giving himself up to the hands of the law! No sooner had he resolved to destroy the will than he was unable to destroy it. No sooner had he felt his inability than again he longed to do the deed. When at three o'clock he dragged himself up wearily to his bed, the will was again within the sermon, and the book was at rest upon its old ground.

Punctually at eleven Mr. Griffith was with him, and it was evident from his manner that he had thought the matter over, and was determined to be kind and gracious.

"Now, squire," said he, "let us hear it; and I do hope it may be something that may make your mind quiet at last. You've had, I fear, a bad time of it since the old squire died."

"Indeed I have, Mr. Griffith."

"What is it now? Whatever it be, you may be sure of this, I will take it charitable like. I won't take nothing amiss; and if so be I can help you, I will."

Cousin Henry, as the door had been opened, and as the man's footstep had been heard, had made up his mind that on this occasion he could not reveal the secret. He had disabled himself by that unfortunate manner of his yesterday. He would not even turn his eyes upon the book, but sat looking into the empty grate. "What is it, Mr. Jones?" asked the farmer.

"My uncle did make a will," said Cousin Henry feebly.

"Of course he made a will. He made a

many,—one or two more than was wise, I am thinking."

"He made a will after the last one."

"After that in your favour?"

"Yes; after that. I know that he did, by what I saw him doing; and so I thought I'd tell you."

"Is that all."

"I thought I'd let you know that I was sure of it. What became of it after it was made, that, you know, is quite another question. I do think it must be in the house, and if so, search ought to be made. If they believe there is such a will, why don't they come and search more regularly? I shouldn't hinder them."

"Is that all you've got to say?"

"As I have been thinking about it so much and as you are so kind to me, I thought I had better tell you."

"But there was something you were to show me."

"Oh, yes; I did say so. If you will come upstairs, I'll point out the very spot where the old man sat when he was writing it."

"There is nothing more than that?"

"Nothing more than that, Mr. Griffith."

"Then good morning, Mr. Jones. I am afraid we have not got to the end of the matter yet."

CHAPTER IV.

AGAIN AT HEREFORD.

Some of the people at Carmarthen were taking a great deal of trouble about the matter. One copy of the Herald was sent regularly to Mr. Brodrick, another to Isabel, and another to Mr. Owen. It was determined that they should not be kept in ignorance of what was being done. In the first number issued after Mr. Apjohn's last visit to Llanfeare there was a short leading article recapitulating all that was hitherto know of the story. "Mr. Henry Jones," said the article in its last paragraph, "has at length been induced to threaten an action for libel against this newspaper. We doubt much whether he will have the courage

to go on with it. But if he does, he will have to put himself into a witness-box, and then probably we may learn something of the truth as to the last will and testament made by Mr. Indefer Jones." All this reached Hereford, and was of course deeply considered there by persons whom it concerned.

Mr. Owen, for some days after the scene which has been described between him and Isabel, saw her frequently, and generally found means to be alone with her for some moments. She made no effort to avoid him, and would fain have been allowed to treat him simply as her dearest friend. But in all these moments he treated her as though she were engaged to be his wife. There was no embracing, no kiss. Isabel would not permit it. But in all terms of affectionate expression he spoke of her and to her as though she were his own; and would only gently laugh at her when she assured him that it could never be so.

"Of course you can torment me a little,"

he said, smiling, "but the forces arrayed against you are too strong, and you have not a chance on your side. It would be monstrous to suppose that you should go on making me miserable for ever,—and yourself too."

In answer to this she could only say that she cared but little for her own misery, and did not believe in his. "The question is," she said, "whether it be fitting. As I feel that it is not fitting, I certainly shall not do it." In answer to this he would again smile, and tell her that a month or two at furthest would see her absolutely conquered.

Then the newspapers reached them. When it became clear to him that there existed in Carmarthenshire so strong a doubt as to the validity of the will under which the property was at present held, then Mr. Owen's visits to the house became rarer and different in their nature. Then he was willing to be simply the friend of the family, and as such he sought no

especial interviews with Isabel. Between him and Isabel no word was spoken as to the contents of the newspaper. But between Mr. Brodrick and the clergyman many words were spoken. Mr. Brodrick declared at once to his intended son-in-law his belief in the accusations which were implied,—which were implied at first, but afterwards made in terms so frightfully clear. When such words as those were said and printed there could, he urged, be no doubt as to what was believed in Carmarthen. And why should it be believed without ground that any man had done so hideous a deed as to destroy a will? The lawyer's hair stood almost on end as he spoke of the atrocity; but yet he believed it. Would a respectable newspaper such as the Carmarthen Herald commit itself to such a course without the strongest assurance? What was it to the Carmarthen Herald? Did not the very continuance of the articles make it clear that the readers of the paper were in accordance

with the writer? Would the public of Carmarthen sympathize in such an attack without the strongest ground? He, the attorney, fully believed in Cousin Henry's guilt; but he was not on that account sanguine as to the proof. If, during his sojourn at Llanfeare, either immediately before the old squire's death or after it, but before the funeral, he had been enabled to lay his hand upon the will and destroy it, what hope would there be of evidence of such guilt? As to that idea of forcing the man to tell such a tale against himself by the torment of cross-examination, he did not believe it at all. A man who had been strong enough to destroy a will would be too strong for that. Perhaps he thought that any man would be too strong, not having known Cousin Henry. Among all the possible chances which occurred to his mind,—and his mind at this time was greatly filled with such considerations,—nothing like the truth suggested itself to him. His heart was tormented by

the idea that the property had been stolen from his child, that the glory of being father-in-law to Llanfeare had been filched from himself, and that no hope for redress remained. He sympathized altogether with the newspaper. He felt grateful to the newspaper. He declared the editor to be a man specially noble and brave in his calling. But he did not believe that the newspaper would do any good either to him or to Isabel.

Mr. Owen doubted altogether the righteousness of the proceeding as regarded the newspaper. As far as he could see there was no evidence against Cousin Henry. There seemed to him to be an injustice in accusing a man of a great crime, simply because the crime might have been possible, and would, if committed, have been beneficial to the criminal. That plan of frightening the man into self-accusation by the terrors of cross-examination was distasteful to him. He would not sympathize with the newspaper. But still he found him-

self compelled to retreat from that affectation of certainty in regard to Isabel which he had assumed when he knew only that the will had been proved, and that Cousin Henry was in possession of the property. He had regarded Isabel and the property as altogether separated from each other. Now he learned that such was not the general opinion in Carmarthenshire. It was not his desire to push forward his suit with the heiress of Llanfeare. He had been rejected on what he had acknowledged to be fitting grounds while that had been her position. When the matter had been altogether settled in Cousin Henry's favour, then he could come forward again.

Isabel was quite sure that the newspaper was right. Did she not remember the dying words with which her uncle had told her that he had again made her his heir? And had she not always clearly in her mind the hang-dog look of that wretched man? She was strong-minded, —but yet a woman, with a woman's propensity

to follow her feelings rather than either facts or reason. Her lover had told her that her uncle had been very feeble when those words had been spoken, with his mind probably vague and his thoughts wandering. It had, perhaps, been but a dream. Such words did not suffice as evidence on which to believe a man guilty of so great a crime. She knew,—so she declared to herself,—that the old man's words had not been vague. And as to those hang-dog looks,—her lover had told her that she should not allow a man's countenance to go so far in evidence as that! In so judging she would trust much too far to her own power of discernment. She would not contradict him, but she felt sure of her discernment in that respect. She did not in the least doubt the truth of the evidence conveyed by the man's hang-dog face.

She had sworn to herself a thousand times that she would not covet the house and property. When her uncle had first declared

to her his purpose of disinheriting her, she had been quite sure of herself that her love for him should not be affected by the change. It had been her pride to think that she could soar above any consideration of money and be sure of her own nobility, even though she should be stricken with absolute poverty. But now she was tempted to long that the newspaper might be found to be right. Was there any man so fitted to be exalted in the world, so sure to fill a high place with honour, as her lover? Though she might not want Llanfeare for herself, was she not bound to want it for his sake? He had told her how certain he was of her heart,—how sure he was that sooner or later he would win her hand. She had almost begun to think that it must be so,—that her strength would not suffice for her to hold to her purpose. But how sweet would be her triumph if she could turn to him and tell him that now the hour had come in which she would be proud to become his wife! "I love

you well enough to rejoice in giving you something, but too well to have been a burden on you when I could give you nothing." That would be sweet to her! Then there should be kisses! As for Cousin Henry, there was not even pity in her heart towards him. It would be time to pity him when he should have been made to give up the fruits of his wickedness and to confess his faults.

Mrs. Brodrick was not made to understand the newspapers, nor did she care much about the work which they had taken in hand. If Isabel could be made to accept that smaller legacy, so that Mr. Owen might marry her out of hand and take her away, that would be enough to satisfy Mrs. Brodrick. If Isabel were settled somewhere with Mr. Owen, their joint means being sufficient to make it certain that no calls would be made on the paternal resources, that would satisfy Mrs. Brodrick's craving in regard to the Welsh property. She was not sure that she was anxious to see

the half-sister of her own children altogether removed from their sphere and exalted so high. And then this smaller stroke of good fortune might be so much more easily made certain! A single word from Isabel herself, a word which any girl less endowed with wicked obstinacy would have spoken at once, would make that sure and immediate. Whereas this great inheritance which was to depend upon some almost impossible confession of the man who enjoyed it, seemed to her to be as distant as ever.

"Bother the newspapers," she said to her eldest daughter; "why doesn't she write and sign the receipt, and take her income like any one else? She was getting new boots at Jackson's yesterday, and where is the money to come from? If any of you want new boots, papa is sure to tell me of it!"

Her spirit was embittered too by the severity of certain words which her husband had spoken to her. Isabel had appealed to her

father when her step-mother had reproached her with being a burden in the house.

"Papa," she had said, "let me leave the house and earn something. I can at any rate earn my bread."

Then Mr. Brodrick had been very angry. He too had wished to accelerate the marriage between his daughter and her lover, thinking that she would surely accept the money on her lover's behalf. He too had been annoyed at the persistency of her double refusal. But it had been very far from his purpose to drive his girl from his house, or to subject her to the misery of such reproaches as his wife had cast upon her.

"My dear," he had said, "there is no necessity for anything of the kind. I and your mother are only anxious for your welfare. I think that you should take your uncle's money, if not for your own sake, then for the sake of him to whom we all hope that you will soon be married. But putting that aside, you are

as well entitled to remain here as your sisters, and, until you are married, here will be your home."

There was comfort in this, some small comfort, but it did not tend to create pleasant intercourse between Isabel and her step-mother. Mrs. Brodrick was a woman who submitted herself habitually to her husband, and intended to obey him, but one who nevertheless would not be deterred from her own little purposes. She felt herself to be ill-used by Isabel's presence in the house. Many years ago Isabel had been taken away, and she had been given to understand that Isabel was removed for ever. There was to be no more expense, no more trouble,—there should be no more jealousies in regard to Isabel. The old uncle had promised to do everything, and that sore had been removed from her life. Now Isabel had come back again, and insisted on remaining there,—so unnecessarily! Now again there were those boots to be bought at Jackson's,

and all those other increased expenditures which another back, another head, another mouth, and another pair of feet must create. And then it was so palpable that Hereford thought much of Isabel, but thought little or nothing of her own girls. Such a one as Mrs. Brodrick was sure to make herself unpleasant in circumstances such as these.

"Isabel," she said to her one day, "I didn't say anything about you being turned out of the house."

"Who has said that you did, mother?"

"You shouldn't have gone to your father and talked about going out as a housemaid."

"I told papa that if he thought it right, I would endeavour to earn my bread."

"You told him that I had complained about you being here."

"So you did. I had to tell him so, or I could not explain my purpose. Of course I am a burden. Every human being who eats and wears clothes and earns nothing is a bur-

den. And I know that this is thought of the more because it had been felt that I had been —been disposed of."

"You could be disposed of now, as you call it, if you pleased."

"But I do not please. That is a matter on which I will listen to no dictation. Therefore it is that I wish that I could go away and earn my own bread. I choose to be independent in that matter, and therefore I ought to suffer for it. It is reasonable enough that I should be felt to be a burden."

Then the other girls came in, and nothing more was said till, after an hour or two, Mrs. Brodrick and Isabel were again alone together.

"I do think it very odd that you cannot take that money; I certainly do," said Mrs. Brodrick.

"What is the use of going on about it? I shall not be made to take it."

"And all those people at Carmarthen so sure that you are entitled to ever so much

more! I say nothing about burdens, but I cannot conceive how you can reconcile it to your conscience when your poor papa has got so many things to pay, and is so little able to pay them."

Then she paused, but as Isabel would not be enticed into any further declaration of independence, she continued, "It certainly is a setting up of your own judgment against people who must know better. As for Mr. Owen, of course it will drive him to look for some one else. The young man wants a wife, and of course he will find one. Then that chance will be lost."

In this way Isabel did not pass her time comfortably at Hereford.

CHAPTER V.

MR. CHEEKEY.

A MONTH had been left for Cousin Henry to consider what he would do,—a month from the day in which he had been forced to accede to Mr. Apjohn's proposal up to that on which he would have to stand before the barrister at Carmarthen, should he be brave enough at last to undergo the ordeal. He had in truth resolved that he would not undergo the ordeal. He was quite sure of himself that nothing short of cart-ropes or of the police would drag him into the witness-box. But still there was the month. There were various thoughts filling his mind. A great expense was being incurred, —most uselessly, if he intended to retreat

before the day came,—and who would pay the money? There was hardly a hope left in his bosom that the property would remain in his hands. His hopes indeed now ran in altogether another direction. In what way might he best get rid of the property? How most readily might he take himself off from Llanfeare and have nothing more to do with the tenants and their rents? But still it was he who would be responsible for this terrible expense. It had been explained to him by the lawyer, that he might either indict the proprietor of the newspaper on a criminal charge or bring a civil action against him for damages. Mr. Apjohn had very strongly recommended the former proceeding. It would be cheaper, he had said, and would show that the man who brought it had simply wished to vindicate his own character. It would be cheaper in the long-run,—because, as the lawyer explained, it would not be so much his object to get a verdict as to show by his presence in the court

that he was afraid of no one. Were he to sue for damages, and, as was probable, not to get them, he must then bear the double expense of the prosecution and defence. Such had been the arguments Mr. Apjohn had used; but he had considered also that if he could bind the man to prosecute the newspaper people on a criminal charge, then the poor victim would be less able to retreat. In such case as that, should the victim's courage fail him at the last moment, a policeman could be made to fetch him and force him into the witness-box. But in the conduct of a civil action no such constraint could be put upon him. Knowing all this, Mr. Apjohn had eagerly explained the superior attractions of a criminal prosecution, and Cousin Henry had fallen into the trap. He understood it all now, but had not been ready enough to do so when the choice had been within his power. He had now bound himself to prosecute, and certainly would be dragged into Carmarthen, unless he

first made known the truth as to the will. If he did that, then he thought that they would surely spare him the trial. Were he to say to them, "There ; I have at last myself found the will. Here, behold it! Take the will and take Llanfeare, and let me escape from my misery," then surely they would not force him to appear in reference to a matter which would have been already decided in their own favour. He had lost that opportunity of giving up the will through Mr. Griffith, but he was still resolved that some other mode must be discovered before the month should have run by. Every day was of moment, and yet the days passed on and nothing was done. His last idea was to send the will to Mr. Apjohn with a letter, in which he would simply declare that he had just found it amongst the sermons, and that he was prepared to go away. But as the days flew by the letter was left unwritten, and the will was still among the sermons.

It will be understood that all this was much

talked of in Carmarthen. Mr. Henry Jones, of Llanfeare, was known to have indicted Mr. Gregory Evans, of the Carmarthen Herald, for the publication of various wicked and malicious libels against himself; and it was known also that Mr. Apjohn was Mr. Jones's attorney in carrying on the prosecution. But not the less was it understood that Mr. Apjohn and Mr. Evans were not hostile to each other in the matter. Mr. Apjohn would be quite honest in what he did. He would do his best to prove the libel,—on condition that his client were the honest owner of the property in question. In truth, however, the great object of them all was to get Henry Jones into a witness-box, so that, if possible, the very truth might be extracted from him.

Day by day and week by week since the funeral the idea had grown and become strong in Carmarthen that some wicked deed had been done. It irked the hearts of them all that such a one as Henry Jones should do

such a deed and not be discovered. Old Indefer Jones had been respected by his neighbours. Miss Brodrick, though not personally well known in the county, had been spoken well of by all men. The idea that Llanfeare should belong to her had been received with favour. Then had come that altered intention in the old squire's mind, and the neighbours had disapproved. Mr. Apjohn had disapproved very strongly, and though he was not without that reticence so essentially necessary to the character of an attorney, his opinion had become known. Then the squire's return to his old purpose was whispered abroad. The Cantors had spoken very freely. Everything done and everything not done at Llanfeare was known in Carmarthen. Mr. Griffith had at length spoken, being the last to abandon all hope as to Cousin Henry's honesty.

Every one was convinced that Cousin Henry had simply stolen the property; and was it to

be endured that such a deed as that should have been done by such a man and that Carmarthen should not find it out? Mr. Apjohn was very much praised for his energy in having forced the man to take his action against Mr. Evans, and no one was more inclined to praise him than Mr. Evans himself. Those who had seen the man did believe that the truth would be worked out of him; and those who had only heard of him were sure that the trial would be a time of intense interest in the borough. The sale of the newspaper had risen immensely, and Mr. Evans was quite the leading man of the hour.

"So you are going to have Mr. Balsam against me?" said Mr. Evans to Mr. Apjohn one day. Now Mr. Balsam was a very respectable barrister, who for many years had gone the Welsh circuit, and was chiefly known for the mildness of his behaviour and an accurate knowledge of law,—two gifts hardly of much value to an advocate in an assize town.

"Yes, Mr. Evans. Mr. Balsam, I have no doubt, will do all that we want."

"I suppose you want to get me into prison?"

"Certainly, if it shall be proved that you have deserved it. The libels are so manifest that it will be only necessary to read them to a jury. Unless you can justify them, I think you will have to go to prison."

"I suppose so. You will come and see me, I am quite sure, Mr. Apjohn."

"I suppose Mr. Cheekey will have something to say on your behalf before it comes to that."

Now Mr. John Cheekey was a gentleman about fifty years of age, who had lately risen to considerable eminence in our criminal courts of law. He was generally called in the profession,—and perhaps sometimes outside it,—"Supercilious Jack," from the manner he had of moving his eyebrows when he was desirous of intimidating a witness. He was a strong,

young-looking, and generally good-humoured Irishman, who had a thousand good points. Under no circumstances would he bully a woman,—nor would he bully a man, unless, according to his own mode of looking at such cases, the man wanted bullying. But when that time did come,—and a reference to the Old Bailey and assize reports in general would show that it came very often,—Supercilious Jack would make his teeth felt worse than any terrier. He could pause in his cross-examination, look at a man, projecting his face forward by degrees as he did so, in a manner which would crush any false witness who was not armed with triple courage at his breast,—and, alas! not unfrequently a witness who was not false. For unfortunately, though Mr. Cheekey intended to confine the process to those who, as he said, wanted bullying, sometimes he made mistakes. He was possessed also of another precious gift,—which, if he had not invented, he had brought to perfection,—that of bullying

the judge also. He had found that by doing so he could lower a judge in the estimation of the jury, and thus diminish the force of a damnatory charge. Mr. Cheekey's services had been especially secured for this trial, and all the circumstances had been accurately explained to him. It was felt that a great day would have arrived in Carmarthen when Mr. Cheekey should stand up in the court to cross-examine Cousin Henry.

"Yes," said Mr. Evans, chuckling, "I think that Mr. Cheekey will have something to say to it. What will be the result, Mr. Apjohn?" he asked abruptly.

"How am I to say? If he can only hold his own like a man, there will, of course, be a verdict of guilty."

"But can he?" asked he of the newspaper.

"I hope he may with all my heart,—if he have done nothing that he ought not to have done. In this matter, Mr. Evans, I have alto-

gether a divided sympathy. I dislike the man utterly. I don't care who knows it. No one knows it better than he himself. The idea of his coming here over that young lady's head was from the first abhorrent to me. When I saw him, and heard him, and found out what he was,—such a poor, cringing, cowardly wretch, —my feeling was of course exacerbated. It was terrible to me that the old squire, whom I had always respected, should have brought such a man among us. But that was the old squire's doing. He certainly did bring him, and as certainly intended to make him his heir. If he did make him his heir, if that will which I read was in truth the last will, then I hope most sincerely that all that Mr. Cheekey may do may be of no avail against him. If that be the case, I shall be glad to have an opportunity of calling upon you in your new lodgings."

"But if there was another will, Mr. Apjohn, —a later will?"

"Then, of course, there is the doubt whether this man be aware of it."

"But if he be aware of it?"

"Then I hope that Mr. Cheekey may tear him limb from limb."

"But you feel sure that it is so?"

"Ah; I do not know about that. It is very hard to be sure of anything. When see him I do feel almost sure that he is guilty; but when I think of it afterwards, I again have my doubts. It is not by men of such calibre that great crimes are committed. I can hardly fancy that he should have destroyed a will."

"Or hidden it?"

"If it were hidden, he would live in agony lest it were discovered. I used to think so when I knew that he passed the whole day sitting in one room. Now he goes out for hours together. Two or three times he has been down with old Griffith at Coed, and twice young Cantor found him lying on the sea

cliff. I doubt whether he would have gone so far afield if the will were hidden in the house."

"Can he have it on his own person?"

"He is not brave enough for that. The presence of it there would reveal itself by the motion of his hands. His fingers would always be on the pocket that contained it. I do not know what to think. And it is because I am in doubt that I have brought him under Mr. Cheekey's thumbscrew. It is a case in which I would, if possible, force a man to confess the truth even against himself. And for this reason I have urged him to prosecute you. But as an honest man myself, I am bound to hope that he may succeed if he be the rightful owner of Llanfeare."

"No one believes it, Mr. Apjohn. Not one in all Carmarthen believes it."

"I will not say what I believe myself. Indeed I do not know. But I do hope that by

Mr. Cheekey's aid or otherwise we may get at the truth."

In his own peculiar circle, with Mr. Geary the attorney, with Mr. Jones the auctioneer, and Mr. Powell, the landlord of the Bush Hotel, Mr. Evans was much more triumphant. Among them, and, indeed, with the gentlemen of Carmarthen generally, he was something of a hero. They did believe it probable that the interloper would be extruded from the property which did not belong to him, and that the doing of this would be due to Mr. Evans. "Apjohn pretends to think that it is very doubtful," said he to his three friends.

"Apjohn isn't doubtful at all," said Mr. Geary, "but he is a little cautious as to expressing himself."

"Apjohn has behaved very well," remarked the innkeeper. "If it wasn't for him we should never have got the rascal to come forward at all. He went out in one of my flies,

but I won't let them charge for it on a job like that."

"I suppose you'll charge for bringing Cousin Henry into the court," said the auctioneer. They had all got to call him Cousin Henry since the idea had got abroad that he had robbed his Cousin Isabel.

"I'd bring him too for nothing, and stand him his lunch into the bargain, rather than that he shouldn't have the pleasure of meeting Mr. Cheekey."

"Cheekey will get it out of him, if there is anything to get," said Mr. Evans.

"My belief is that Mr. Cheekey will about strike him dumb. If he has got anything in his bosom to conceal, he will be so awe-struck that he won't be able to open his mouth. He won't be got to say he did it, but he won't be able to say he didn't." This was Mr. Geary's opinion.

"What would that amount to?" asked Mr. Powell. "I'm afraid they couldn't give the

place back to the young lady because of that."

"The jury would acquit Mr. Evans. That's about what it would amount to," said the attorney.

"And Cousin Henry would go back to Llanfeare, and have all his troubles over," remarked Mr. Jones. This they deemed to be a disastrous termination to all the trouble which they were taking, but one which seemed by no means improbable.

They all agreed that even Mr. Cheekey would hardly be able to extract from the man an acknowledgment that he had with his own hands destroyed the will. Such a termination as that to a cross-examination had never been known under the hands of the most expert of advocates. That Cousin Henry might be stricken dumb, that he might faint, that he might be committed for contempt of court,—all these events were possible, or perhaps, not impossible; but that he should say, "Yes, I

did it. I burnt the will. Yes, I, with my own hands,"—that they all declared to be impossible. And, if so, Cousin Henry would go back again to Llanfeare confirmed in his possession of the property.

"He will only laugh at us in his sleeve when it is over," said the auctioneer.

They little knew the torments which the man was enduring, or how unlikely it was that he should laugh in his sleeve at any one. We are too apt to forget when we think of the sins and faults of men how keen may be their conscience in spite of their sins. While they were thus talking of Cousin Henry, he was vainly endeavouring to console himself with the reflection that he had not committed any great crime, that there was still a road open to him for repentance, that if only he might be allowed to escape and repent in London, he would be too glad to resign Llanfeare and all its glories. The reader will hardly suppose that Cousin Henry will return after

the trial to laugh in his sleeve in his own library in his own house.

A few days afterwards Mr. Apjohn was up in town and had an interview with Mr. Balsam, the barrister. "This client of mine does not seem to be a nice sort of country gentleman," said Mr. Balsam.

"Anything but that. You will understand, Mr. Balsam, that my only object in persuading him to indict the paper has been to put him into a witness-box. I told him so, of course. I explained to him that unless he would appear there, he could never hold up his head."

"And he took your advice."

"Very unwillingly. He would have given his right hand to escape. But I gave him no alternative. I so put it before him that he could not refuse to do as I bade him without owning himself to be a rascal. Shall I tell you what I think will come of it?"

"What will come of it?"

"He will not appear. I feel certain that he will not have the courage to show himself in the court. When the day comes, or, perhaps, a day or two before, he will run away."

"What will you do then?"

"Ah, that's the question. What shall we do then? He is bound to prosecute, and will have to pay the penalty. In such a case as this I think we could have him found and brought into court for the next assizes. But what could we do then? Though we were ever so rough to him in the way of contempt of court and the rest of it, we cannot take the property away. If he has got hold of the will and destroyed it, or hidden it, we can do nothing as to the property as long as he is strong enough to hold his tongue. If he can be made to speak, then I think we shall get at it."

Mr. Balsam shook his head. He was quite willing to believe that his client was as base

as Mr. Apjohn represented him to be; but he was not willing to believe that Mr. Cheekey was as powerful as had been assumed.

CHAPTER VI.

COUSIN HENRY GOES TO CARMARTHEN.

On his return from London Mr. Apjohn wrote the following letter to his client, and this he sent to Llanfeare by a clerk, who was instructed to wait there for an answer:—

"My dear Sir,—

"I have just returned from London, where I saw Mr. Balsam, who will be employed on your behalf at the assizes. It is necessary that you should come into my office, so that I may complete the instructions which are to be given to counsel. As I could not very well do this at Llanfeare without considerable inconvenience, I must give you this trouble. My clerk who takes this out to you will bring

back your answer, saying whether eleven in the morning to-morrow or three in the afternoon will best suit your arrangements. You can tell him also whether you would wish me to send a fly for you. I believe that you still keep your uncle's carriage, in which case it would perhaps be unnecessary. A message sent by the clerk will suffice, so that you may be saved the trouble of writing.

"Yours truly,

"NICHOLAS APJOHN."

The clerk had made his way into the book-room in which Cousin Henry was sitting, and stood there over him while he was reading the letter. He felt sure that it had been arranged by Mr. Apjohn that it should be so, in order that he might not have a moment to consider the reply which he would send. Mr. Apjohn had calculated, traitor that he was to the cause of his client,—so thought Cousin Henry,—that the man's presence would rob him of his pre-

sence of mind so as to prevent him from sending a refusal.

"I don't see why I should go into Carmarthen at all," he said.

"Oh, sir, it's quite essential,—altogether essential in a case such as this. You are bound to prosecute, and of course you must give your instructions. If Mr. Apjohn were to bring everything out here for the purpose, the expense would be tremendous. In going there, it will only be the fly, and it will all be done in five minutes."

"Who will be there?" asked Cousin Henry after a pause.

"I shall be there," answered the clerk, not unnaturally putting himself first, "and Mr. Apjohn, and perhaps one of the lads."

"There won't be any—barrister?" asked Cousin Henry, showing the extent of his fear by his voice and his countenance.

"Oh, dear, no; they won't be here till the assizes. A barrister never sees his own client.

You'll go in as a witness, and will have nothing to do with the barristers till you're put up face to face before them in the witness-box. Mr. Balsam is a very mild gentleman."

"He is employed by me?"

"Oh, yes; he's on our side. His own side never matters much to a witness. It's when the other side tackles you!"

"Who is the other side?" asked Cousin Henry.

"Haven't you heard?" The voice in which this was said struck terror to the poor wretch's soul. There was awe in it and pity, and something almost of advice,—as though the voice were warning him to prepare against the evil which was threatening him. "They have got Mr. Checkey!" Here the voice became even more awful. "I knew they would when I first heard what the case was to be. They've got Mr. Checkey. They don't care much about money when they're going it like that. There

are many of them I have known awful enough, but he's the awfullest."

"He can't eat a fellow," said Cousin Henry, trying to look like a man with good average courage.

"No; he can't eat a fellow. It isn't that way he does it. I've known some of 'em who looked as though they were going to eat a man; but he looks as though he were going to skin you, and leave you bare for the birds to eat you. He's gentle enough at first, is Mr. Cheekey."

"What is it all to me?" asked Cousin Henry.

"Oh, nothing, sir. To a gentleman like you who knows what he's about it's all nothing. What can Mr. Cheekey do to a gentleman who has got nothing to conceal? But when a witness has something to hide,—and sometimes there will be something,—then it is that Mr. Cheekey comes out strong. He looks into a man and sees that it's there,

and then he turns him inside out till he gets at it. That's what I call skinning a witness. I saw a poor fellow once so knocked about by Mr. Cheekey that they had to carry him down speechless out of the witness-box."

It was a vivid description of all that Cousin Henry had pictured to himself. And he had actually, by his own act, subjected himself to this process! Had he been staunch in refusing to bring any action against the newspaper, Mr. Cheekey would have been powerless in reference to him. And now he was summoned into Carmarthen to prepare himself by minor preliminary pangs for the torture of the auto-da-fé which was to be made of him.

"I don't see why I should go into Carmarthen at all," he said, having paused a while after the eloquent description of the barrister's powers.

"Not come into Carmarthen! Why, sir, you must complete the instructions."

"I don't see it at all."

"Then do you mean to back out of it altogether, Mr. Jones? I wouldn't be afeared by Mr. Cheekey like that!"

Then it occurred to him that if he did mean to back out of it altogether he could do so better at a later period, when they might hardly be able to catch him by force and bring him as a prisoner before the dreaded tribunal. And as it was his purpose to avoid the trial by giving up the will, which he would pretend to have found at the moment of giving it up, he would ruin his own project,—as he had done so many projects before,—by his imbecility at the present moment. Cheekey would not be there in Mr. Apjohn's office, nor the judge and jury and all the crowd of the court to look at him.

"I don't mean to back out at all," he said; "and it's very impertinent of you to say so."

"I didn't mean impertinence, Mr. Jones; —only it is necessary you should come into Mr. Apjohn's office."

"Very well; I'll come to-morrow at three."

"And about the fly, Mr. Jones?"

"I can come in my own carriage."

"Of course. That's what Mr. Apjohn said. But if I may make so bold, Mr. Jones,—wouldn't all the people in Carmarthen know the old Squire's carriage?"

Here was another trouble. Yes; all the people in Carmarthen would know the old Squire's carriage, and after all those passages in the newspapers,—believing, as he knew they did, that he had stolen the property,—would clamber up on the very wheels to look at him! The clerk had been right in that.

"I don't mean it for any impertinence, Mr. Jones; but wouldn't it be better just to come in and to go out quiet in one of Mr. Powell's flies?"

"Very well," said Cousin Henry. "Let the fly come."

"I thought it would be best," said the clerk, taking cowardly advantage of his success

over the prostrate wretch. "What's the use of a gentleman taking his own carriage through the streets on such an occasion as this? They are so prying into everything in Carmarthen. Now, when they see the Bush fly, they won't think as anybody particular is in it." And so it was settled. The fly should be at Llanfeare by two o'clock on the following day.

Oh, if he could but die! If the house would fall upon him and crush him! There had not been a word spoken by that reptile of a clerk which he had not understood,—not an arrow cast at him the sting of which did not enter into his very marrow! "Oh, nothing, sir, to a gentleman like you." The man had looked at him as he had uttered the words with a full appreciation of the threat conveyed. "They've got a rod in pickle for you;—for you, who have stolen your cousin's estate! Mr. Cheekey is coming for you!" That was what the miscreant of a clerk had said to him. And

then, though he had found himself compelled to yield to that hint about the carriage, how terrible was it to have to confess that he was afraid to be driven through Carmarthen in his own carriage!

He must go into Carmarthen and face Mr. Apjohn once again. That was clear. He could not now send the will in lieu of himself. Why had he not possessed the presence of mind to say to the clerk at once that no further steps need be taken? "No further steps need be taken. I have found the will. Here it is. I found it this very morning among the books. Take it to Mr. Apjohn, and tell him I have done with Llanfeare and all its concerns." How excellent would have been the opportunity! And it would not have been difficult for him to act his part amidst the confusion to which the clerk would have been brought by the greatness of the revelation made to him. But he had allowed the chance to pass, and now he must go into Carmarthen!

At half-past two the following day he put himself into the fly. During the morning he had taken the will out of the book, determined to carry it with him to Carmarthen in his pocket. But when he attempted to enclose it in an envelope for the purpose, his mind misgave him and he restored it. Hateful as was the property to him, odious as were the house and all things about it, no sooner did the doing of the act by which he was to release himself from them come within the touch of his fingers, than he abandoned the idea. At such moments the estate would again have charms for him, and he would remember that such a deed, when once done, would admit of no recall.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Jones," said the attorney as his client entered the inner office. "There are a few words which must be settled between you and me before the day comes, and no time has to be lost. Sit down, Mr. Ricketts, and write the headings of the questions and

answers. Then Mr. Jones can initial them afterwards."

Mr. Ricketts was the clerk who had come out to Llanfeare. Cousin Henry sat silent as Mr. Ricketts folded his long sheet of folio paper with a double margin. Here was a new terror to him; and as he saw the preparations he almost made up his mind that he would on no account sign his name to anything.

The instructions to be given to Mr. Balsam were in fact very simple, and need not here be recapitulated. His uncle had sent for him to Llanfeare, had told him that he was to be the heir, had informed him that a new will had been made in his favour. After his uncle's death and subsequent to the funeral, he had heard a will read, and under that will had inherited the property. As far as he believed, or at any rate as far as he knew, that was his uncle's last will and testament. These were the instructions which, under Mr. Ap-

john's advice, were to be given to Mr. Balsam as to his (Cousin Henry's) direct evidence.

Then Cousin Henry, remembering his last communication to Farmer Griffith, remembering also all that the two Cantors could prove, added something on his own account.

"I saw the old man writing up in his room," he said, "copying something which I knew to be a will. I was sure then he was going to make another change and take the property from me." "No; I asked him no questions. I thought it very cruel, but it was of no use for me to say anything." "No; he didn't tell me what he was about; but I knew it was another will. I wouldn't condescend to ask a question. When the Cantors said that they had witnessed a will, I never doubted them. When you came there to read the will, I supposed it would be found. Like enough it's there now, if proper search were made. I can tell all that to Mr. Balsam if he wants to know it."

"Why didn't you tell me all this before?" said Mr. Apjohn.

"It isn't much to tell. It's only what I thought. If what the Cantors said and what you all believed yourselves didn't bring you to the will, nothing I could say would help you. It doesn't amount to more than thinking after all."

Then Mr. Apjohn was again confused and again in doubt. Could it be possible after all that the conduct on the part of the man which had been so prejudicial to him in the eyes of all men had been produced simply by the annoyances to which he had been subjected? It was still possible that the old man had himself destroyed the document which he had been tempted to make, and that they had all of them been most unjust to this poor fellow. He added, however, all the details of this new story to the instructions which were to be given to Mr. Balsam, and to which Cousin Henry did attach his signature.

Then came some further conversation about Mr. Cheekey, which, however, did not take an official form. What questions Mr. Cheekey might ask would be between Mr. Cheekey and the other attorney, and formed no part of Mr. Apjohn's direct business. He had intended to imbue his client with something of the horror with which his clerk had been before him in creating, believing that the cause of truth would be assisted by reducing the man to the lowest condition of mean terror. But this new story somewhat changed his purpose. If the man were innocent,—if there were but some small probability of his innocence,—was it not his duty to defend him as a client from ill-usage on the part of Cheekey? That Cheekey must have his way with him was a matter of course,—that is, if Cousin Henry appeared at all; but a word or two of warning might be of service.

"You will be examined on the other side by Mr. Cheekey," he said, intending to assume a

pleasant voice. At the hearing of the awful name, sweat broke out on Cousin Henry's brow. "You know what his line will be?"

"I don't know anything about it."

"He will attempt to prove that another will was made."

"I do not deny it. Haven't I said that I think another will was made?"

"And that you are either aware of its existence—;" here Mr. Apjohn paused, having resumed that stern tone of his voice which was so disagreeable to Cousin Henry's ears—"or that you have destroyed it."

"What right has he got to say that I have destroyed it? I have destroyed nothing."

Mr. Apjohn marked the words well, and was again all but convinced that his client was not innocent. "He will endeavour to make a jury believe from words coming out of your own mouth, or possibly by your silence, that you have either destroyed the deed,—or have concealed it."

Cousin Henry thought a moment whether he had concealed the will or not. No! he had not put it within the book. The man who hides a thing is the man who conceals the thing,—not a man who fails to tell that he has found it.

"Or—concealed it," repeated Mr. Apjohn with that peculiar voice of his.

"I have not concealed it," said the victim.

"Nor know where it lies hidden?" Ghastly pale he became,—livid, almost blue by degrees. Though he was fully determined to give up the will, he could not yield to the pressure now put upon him. Nor could he withstand it. The question was as terrible to him as though he had entertained no idea of abandoning the property. To acknowledge that he knew all along where it was hidden would be to confess his guilt and to give himself up to the tormentors of the law.

"Nor know where it lies hidden?" repeated Mr. Apjohn, in a low voice. "Go out of the

room, Ricketts," he said. "Nor know where it lies hidden?" he asked a third time when the clerk had closed the door behind him.

"I know nothing about it," gasped the poor man.

"You have nothing beyond that to say to me?"

"Nothing."

"You would rather that it should be left to Mr. Cheekey? If there be anything further that you can say, I should be more tender with you than he."

"Nothing."

"And here, in this room, there is no public to gaze upon you."

"Nothing," he gasped again.

"Very well. So be it. Ricketts, see if the fly be there for Mr. Jones." A few minutes afterwards his confidential clerk was alone with him in the room.

"I have learned so much, Ricketts," said

he. "The will is still in existence. I am sure of that. And he knows its whereabouts. We shall have Miss Brodrick there before Christmas yet."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. APJOHN SENDS FOR ASSISTANCE.

THE last words in the last chapter were spoken by Mr. Apjohn to his confidential clerk in a tone of triumph. He had picked up something further, and, conscious that he had done so by his own ingenuity, was for a moment triumphant. But when he came to think over it all alone,—and he spent many hours just at present in thinking of this matter,—he was less inclined to be self-satisfied. He felt that a great responsibility rested with him, and that this weighed upon him peculiarly at the present moment. He was quite sure not only that a later will had been made, but that it was in existence. It

was concealed somewhere, and Cousin Henry knew the secret of its hiding-place. It had existed, at any rate, that morning; but now came the terrible question whether the man, driven to his last gasp in his misery, would not destroy it. Not only had Mr. Apjohn discovered the secret, but he was well aware that Cousin Henry was conscious that he had done so, and yet not a word had been spoken between them which, should the will now be destroyed, could be taken as evidence that it had ever existed. Let the paper be once burnt, and Cousin Henry would be safe in possession of the property. Mr. Cheekey might torment his victim, but certainly would not extract from him a confession such as that. The hiding of the will, the very place in which it was hidden, might possibly be extracted. It was conceivable that ingenuity on one side and abject terror on the other might lead a poor wretch to betray the secret; but a man who has committed a felony

will hardly confess the deed in a court of law. Something of all this would, thought Mr. Apjohn, occur to Cousin Henry himself, and by this very addition to his fears he might be driven to destroy the will. The great object now should be to preserve a document which had lived as it were a charmed life through so many dangers. If anything were to be done with this object,—anything new,—it must be done at once. Even now, while he was thinking of it, Cousin Henry was being taken slowly home in Mr. Powell's fly, and might do the deed as soon as he found himself alone in the book-room. Mr. Apjohn was almost sure that the will was concealed somewhere in the book-room. That long-continued sojourn in the chamber, of which the whole county had heard so much, told him that it was so. He was there always, watching the hiding-place. Would it be well that searchers should again be sent out, and that they should be instructed never to leave that room till after Cousin Henry's examina-

tion should be over? If so, it would be right that a man should be sent off instantly on horseback, so as to prevent immediate destruction. But then he had no power to take such a step in reference to another man's house. It was a question whether any magistrate would give him such a warrant, seeing that search had already been made, and that, on the failure of such search, the Squire's will had already been proved. A man's house is his castle, let the suspicion against him be what it may, unless there be evidence to support it. Were he to apply to a magistrate, he could only say that the man's own manner and mode of speech had been evidence of his guilt. And yet how much was there hanging, perhaps, on the decision of the moment! Whether the property should go to the hands of her who was entitled to enjoy it, or remain in the possession of a thief such as this, might so probably depend on the action which should be taken, now, at this very instant!

Mr. Ricketts, his confidential clerk, was the only person with whom he had fully discussed all the details of the case,—the only person to whom he had expressed his own thoughts as they had occurred to him. He had said a word to the clerk in triumph as Cousin Henry left him, but a few minutes afterwards recalled him with an altered tone. "Ricketts," he said, "the man has got that will with him in the book-room at Llanfeare."

"Or in his pocket, sir," suggested Ricketts.

"I don't think it. Wherever it be at this moment, he has not placed it there himself. The Squire put it somewhere, and he has found it."

"The Squire was very weak when he made that will, sir," said the clerk. "Just at that time he was only coming down to the dining-room, when the sun shone in just for an hour or two in the day. If he put the will any-

where, it would probably be in his bedroom."

"The man occupies another chamber?" asked the attorney.

"Yes, sir; the same room he had before his uncle died."

"It's in the book-room," repeated Mr. Apjohn.

"Then he must have put it there."

"But he didn't. From his manner, and from a word or two that he spoke, I feel sure that the paper has been placed where it is by other hands."

"The old man never went into the book-room. I heard every detail of his latter life from Mrs. Griffith when the search was going on. He hadn't been there for more than a month. If he wanted anything out of the book-room, after the young lady went away, he sent Mrs. Griffith for it."

"What did he send for?" asked Mr. Apjohn.

"He used to read a little sometimes," said the clerk.

"Sermons?" suggested Mr. Apjohn. "For many years passed he has read sermons to himself whenever he has failed in going to church. I have seen the volumes there on the table in the parlour when I have been with him. Did they search the books?"

"Had every volume off the shelves, sir."

"And opened every one of them?"

"That I can't tell. I wasn't there."

"Every volume should have been shaken," said Mr. Apjohn.

"It's not too late yet, sir," said the clerk.

"But how are we to get in and do it? I have no right to go into his house, or any man's, to search it."

"He wouldn't dare to hinder you, sir."

Then there was a pause before anything further was said.

"The step is such a strong one to take," said the lawyer, "when one is guided only by one's own inner conviction. I have no tittle of evidence in my favour to prove anything beyond the fact that the old Squire in the latter days of his life did make a will which has not been found. For that we have searched, and, not finding it, have been forced to admit to probate the last will which we ourselves made. Since that nothing has come to my knowledge. Guided partly by the man's ways while he has been at Llanfeare, and partly by his own manner and hesitation, I have come to a conclusion in my own mind; but it is one which I would hardly dare to propose to a magistrate as a ground for action."

"But if he consented, sir?"

"Still, I should be hardly able to justify myself for such intrusion if nothing were found. We have no right to crush the poor creature because he is so easily crushable. I feel already pricks of conscience because I am

bringing down Jack Cheekey upon him. If it all be as I have suggested,—that the will is hidden, let us say in some volume of sermons there,—what probability is there that he will destroy it now?"

"He would before the trial, I think."

"But not at once? I think not. He will not allow himself to be driven to the great crime till the last moment. It is quite on the cards that his conscience will even at last be too strong for it."

"We owe him something, sir, for not destroying it when he first found it."

"Not a doubt! If we are right in all this, we do owe him something,—at any rate, charity enough to suppose that the doing of such a deed must be very distasteful to him. When I think of it I doubt whether he'll do it at all."

"He asked me why they didn't come and search again."

"Did he? I shouldn't wonder if the poor

devil would be glad enough to be relieved from it all. I'll tell you what I'll do, Ricketts. I'll write to Miss. Brodrick's father, and ask him to come over here before the trial. He is much more concerned in the matter than I am, and should know as well what ought to be done."

The letter was written urging Mr. Brodrick to come at once. "I have no right to tell you," Mr. Apjohn said in his letter, "that there is ground for believing that such a document as that I have described is still existing. I might too probably be raising false hope were I to do so. I can only tell you of my own suspicion, explaining to you at the same time on what ground it is founded. I think it would be well that you should come over and consult with me whether further steps should be taken. If so, come at once. The trial is fixed for Friday the 30th." This was written on Thursday the 22nd. There was, therefore, not much more than a week's interval.

"You will come with me," said Mr. Brodrick to the Rev. William Owen, after showing to him the letter from the attorney at Hereford.

"Why should I go with you?"

"I would wish you to do so—on Isabel's behalf."

"Isabel and I are nothing to each other."

"I am sorry to hear you say that. It was but the other day that you declared that she should be your wife in spite of herself."

"So she shall, if Mr. Henry Jones be firmly established at Llanfeare. It was explained to me before why your daughter, as owner of Llanfeare, ought not to marry me, and, as I altogether agreed with the reason given, it would not become me to take any step in this matter. As owner of Llanfeare she will be nothing to me. It cannot therefore be right that I should look after her interests in that

direction. On any other subject I would do anything for her."

The father no doubt felt that the two young people were self-willed, obstinate, and contradictory. His daughter wouldn't marry the clergyman because she had been deprived of her property. The clergyman now refused to marry his daughter because it was presumed that her property might be restored to her. As, however, he could not induce Mr. Owen to go with him to Carmarthen, he determined to go alone. He did not give much weight to this new story. It seemed to him certain that the man would destroy the will,—or would already have destroyed it,—if in the first instance he was wicked enough to conceal it. Still the matter was so great and the question so important to his daughter's interest that he felt himself compelled to do as Mr. Apjohn had proposed. But he did not do it altogether as Mr. Apjohn had proposed. He allowed others matters to interfere, and postponed his

journey till Tuesday the 27th of the month. Late on that evening he reached Carmarthen, and at once went to Mr. Apjohn's house.

Cousin Henry's journey into Carmarthen had been made on the previous Thursday, and since that day no new steps had been taken to unravel the mystery,—none at least which had reference to Llanfeare. No further search had been made among the books. All that was known in Carmarthen of Cousin Henry during these days was that he remained altogether within the house. Were he so minded, ample time was allowed to him for the destruction of any document. In the town, preparation went on in the usual way for the Assizes, at which the one case of interest was to be the indictment of Mr. Evans for defamation of character. It was now supposed by the world at large that Cousin Henry would come into court; and because this was believed of him there was something of a slight turn of public opinion in his

favour. It would hardly be the case that the man, if really guilty, would encounter Mr. Cheekey.

During the days that had elapsed, even Mr. Apjohn himself had lost something of his confidence. If any further step was to be taken, why did not the young lady's father himself come and take it? Why had he been so dilatory in a matter which was of so much greater importance to himself than to any one else? But now the two attorneys were together, and it was necessary that they should decide upon doing something,—or nothing.

"I hoped you would have been here last week," said Mr. Apjohn.

"I couldn't get away. There were things I couldn't possibly leave."

"It is so important," said Mr. Apjohn.

"Of course it is important,—of most vital importance,—if there be any hope."

"I have told you exactly what I think and feel."

"Yes, yes. I know how much more than kind, how honourable you have been in all this matter. You still think that the will is hidden?"

"I did think so."

"Something has changed your opinion?"

"I can hardly say that either," said Mr. Apjohn. "There was ground on which to form my opinion, and I do not know that there is any ground for changing it. But in such a matter the mind will vacillate. I did think that he had found the will shut up in a volume of sermons, in a volume which his uncle had been reading during his illness, and that he had left the book in its place upon the shelf. That, you will say, is a conclusion too exact for man to reach without anything in the shape of absolute evidence."

"I do not say so; but then as yet I hardly

know the process by which that belief has been reached."

"But I say so;—I say that is too exact. There is more of imagination in it than of true deduction. I certainly should not recommend another person to proceed far on such reasoning. You see it has been in this way." Then he explained to his brother attorney the process of little circumstances by which he had arrived at his own opinion;—the dislike of the man to leave the house, his clinging to one room, his manifest possession of a secret as evinced by his conversations with Farmer Griffith, his continual dread of something, his very clinging to Llanfeare as a residence which would not have been the case had he destroyed the will, his exaggerated fear of the coming cross-examination, his ready assertion that he had destroyed nothing and hidden nothing,—but his failure to reply when he was asked whether he was aware of any such concealment. Then the fact that the books had not

been searched themselves, that the old Squire had never personally used the room, but had used a book or one or two books which had been taken from it; that these books had been volumes which had certainly been close to him in those days when the lost will was being written. All these and other little details known to the reader made the process by which Mr. Apjohn had arrived at the conclusion which he now endeavoured to explain to Mr. Brodrick.

"I grant that the chain is slight," said Mr. Apjohn, "so slight that a feather may break it. The strongest point in it all was the look on the man's face when I asked him the last question. Now I have told you everything, and you must decide what we ought to do."

But Mr. Brodrick was a man endowed with lesser gifts than those of the other attorney. In such a matter Mr. Apjohn was sure to lead. "What do you think yourself?"

"I would propose that we, you and I, should go together over to Llanfeare to-morrow and ask him to allow us to make what further search we may please about the house. If he permitted this—"

"But would he?"

"I think he would. I am not at all sure but what he would wish to have the will found. If he did, we could begin and go through every book in the library. We would begin with the sermons, and soon know whether it be as I have suggested."

"But if he refused?"

"Then I think I would make bold to insist on remaining there while you went to a magistrate. I have indeed already prepared Mr. Evans of Llancolly, who is the nearest magistrate. I would refuse to leave the room, and you would then return with a search warrant and a policeman. But as for opening the special book or books, I could do that with or without his permission. While you talk to

him I will look round the room and see where they are. I don't think much of it all, Mr. Brodrick; but when the stake is so high, it is worth playing for. If we fail in this, we can then only wait and see what the redoubtable Mr. Cheekey may be able to do for us."

Thus it was settled that Mr. Brodrick and Mr. Apjohn should go out to Llanfeare on the following morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOUBTS.

"I KNOW nothing about it," Cousin Henry had gasped out when asked by Mr. Apjohn, when Rickets, the clerk, had left the room, whether he knew where the will was hidden. Then, when he had declared he had nothing further to say, he was allowed to go away.

As he was carried back in the fly he felt certain that Mr. Apjohn knew that there had been a will, knew that the will was still in existence, knew that it had been hidden by some accident, and knew also that he, Henry Jones, was aware of the place of concealment. That the man should have

been so expert in reading the secret of his bosom was terrible to him. Had the man suspected him of destroying the will, —a deed the doing of which might have been so naturally suspected,—that would have been less terrible. He had done nothing, had committed no crime, was simply conscious of the existence of a paper which it was a duty, not of him, but of others to find, and this man, by his fearful ingenuity, had discovered it all! Now it was simply necessary that the place should be indicated, and in order that he himself might be forced to indicate it, Mr. Cheekey was to be let loose upon him!

How impossible,—how almost impossible had he found it to produce a word in answer to that one little question from Mr. Apjohn! "Nor know where it is hidden?" He had so answered it as to make it manifest that he did know. He was conscious that he had been thus weak, though there had

been nothing in Mr. Apjohn's manner to appall him. How would it be with him when, hour after hour, question after question should be demanded of him, when that cruel tormentor should stand there glaring at him in presence of all the court? There would be no need of such hour,—no need of that prolonged questioning. All that was wanted of him would be revealed at once. The whole secret would be screwed out of him by the first turn of the tormentor's engine.

There was but one thing quite fixed in his mind. Nothing should induce him to face Mr. Cheekey, unless he should have made himself comparatively safe by destroying the will. In that way he almost thought he might be safe. The suffering would be great. The rack and the thumbscrew, the boots and the wheel, would, to the delight of all those present, be allowed to do their worst upon him for hours. It would be a day to him terrible to anticipate, terrible to endure, terrible

afterwards in his memory; but he thought that not even Mr. Cheekey himself would be able to extract from him the admission of such a deed as that.

And then by that deed he would undoubtedly acquire Llanfeare. The place itself was not dear to him, but there was rising in his heart so strong a feeling of hatred against those who were oppressing him that it seemed to him almost a duty to punish them by continued possession of the property. In this way he could triumph over them all. If once he could come down from Mr. Cheekey's grasp alive, if he could survive those fearful hours, he would walk forth from the court the undoubted owner of Llanfeare. It would be as though a man should endure some excruciating operation under the hands of a surgeon, with the assured hope that he might enjoy perfect health afterwards for the remainder of his life.

To destroy the will was his only chance of

escape. There was nothing else left to him, knowing, as he did, that it was impossible for him to put an end to his own life with his own hands. These little plots of his, which he had planned for the revelation of his secret without the acknowledgment of guilt, had all fallen to pieces as he attempted to execute them. He began to be aware of himself that anything that required skill in the execution was impossible to him. But to burn the will he was capable. He could surely take the paper from its hiding-place and hold it down with the poker when he had thrust it between the bars. Or, as there was no fire provided in these summer months, he could consume it by the light of his candle when the dead hours of the night had come upon him. He had already resolved that, when he had done so, he would swallow the tell-tale ashes. He believed of himself that all that would be within his power, if only he could determine upon the doing of it.

And he thought that the deed when done would give him a new courage. The very danger to which he would have exposed himself would make him brave to avoid it. Having destroyed the will, and certain that no eye had seen him, conscious that his safety depended on his own reticence, he was sure that he would keep his secret even before Mr. Cheekey.

"I know nothing of the will," he would say; "I have neither seen it, nor hidden it, nor found it, nor destroyed it."

Knowing what would be the consequences were he to depart from that assertion, he would assuredly cling to it. He would be safer then, much safer than in his present vacillating, half-innocent position.

As he was carried home in the fly, his mind was so intent upon this, he was so anxious to resolve to bring himself to do the deed, that he hardly knew where he was when the fly stopped at his hall door. As he entered

his house, he stared about him as though doubtful of his whereabouts, and then, without speaking a word, made his way into the book-room, and seated himself on his accustomed chair. The woman came to him and asked him whether money should not be given to the driver.

"What driver?" said he. "Let him go to Mr. Apjohn. It is Mr. Apjohn's business, not mine." Then he got up and shut the door violently as the woman retreated.

Yes; it was Mr. Apjohn's business; and he thought that he could put a spoke into the wheel of Mr. Apjohn's business. Mr. Apjohn was not only anxious to criminate him now, but had been anxious when such anxiety on his part had been intrusive and impertinent. Mr. Apjohn had, from first to last, been his enemy, and by his enmity had created that fatal dislike which his uncle had felt for him. Mr. Apjohn was now determined to ruin him.

Mr. Apjohn had come out to him at Llanfeare, pretending to be his lawyer, his friend, his adviser, and had recommended this treacherous indictment merely that he might be able to subject him to the torments of Mr. Cheekey's persecution. Cousin Henry could see it all now! So, at least, Cousin Henry told himself.

"He is a clever fellow, and he thinks that I am a fool. Perhaps he is right, but he will find that the fool has been too many for him."

It was thus that he communed with himself.

He had his dinner and sat by himself during the whole evening, as had been his practice every day since his uncle's death. But yet this peculiar night seemed to him to be eventful. He felt himself to be lifted into some unwonted eagerness of life, something approaching to activity. There was a deed to be done, and though he was not as yet

doing it, though he did not think that he intended to do it that very night, yet the fact that he had made up his mind made him in some sort aware that the dumb spirit which would not speak had been exorcised, and that the crushing dulness of the latter days had passed away from him. No; he could not do it that night; but he was sure that he would do it. He had looked about for a way of escape, and had been as though a dead man while he could not find it. He had lived in terror of Mrs. Griffith the housekeeper, of Farmer Griffith, of the two Cantors, of Mr. Apjohn, of that tyrant Cheekey, of his own shadow,—while he and that will were existing together in the same room. But it should be so no longer. There was one way of escape, and he would take it!

Then he went on thinking of what good things might be in store for him. His spirit had hitherto been so quenched by the vicinity of the will that he had never dared to

soar into thoughts of the enjoyment of money. There had been so black a pall over everything that he had not as yet realized what it was that Llanfeare might do for him. Of course he could not live there. Though he should have to leave the house untenanted altogether, it would matter but little. There was no law to make a man live on his own estate. He calculated that he would be able to draw 1500*l.* a year from the property;—1500*l.* a year! That would be clearly his own; on which no one could lay a finger; and what enjoyment could he not buy with 1500*l.* a year?

With a great resolve to destroy the will he went to bed, and slept through the night as best he could. In the dark of his chamber, when the candle was out, and he was not yet protected by his bed, there came a qualm upon him. But the deed was not yet done, and the qualm was kept under, and he slept. He even repeated the Lord's Prayer to himself when he was under the clothes, struggling,

however, as he did so, not to bring home to himself that petition as to the leading into temptation and the deliverance from evil.

The next day, the Friday, and the Saturday were passed in the same way. The resolution was still there, but the qualms came every night. And the salve to the qualm was always the same remembrance that the deed had not been done yet. And the prayer was always said, morning and night, with the same persistent rejection of those words which, in his present condition, were so damning to him,—rejection from the intelligence though with the whispering voice the words were spoken. But still there was the resolve the same as ever. There was no other way of escape. A stag, when brought to bay, will trample upon the hounds. He would trample upon them. Llanfeare should all be his own. He would not return to his clerk's desk to be the scorn of all men,—to have it known that he had fraudulently kept the will hidden, and then

revealed it, not of grace, but because he was afraid of Mr. Cheekey. His mind was quite made up. But the deed need not be yet done. The fewer nights that he would have to pass in that house, after the doing of the deed, the better.

The trial was to be on the Friday. He would not postpone the deed till the last day, as it might be then that emissaries might come to him, watching him to see that he did not escape. And yet it would be well for him to keep his hands clean from the doing of it up to the last moment. He was quite resolved. There was no other escape. And yet,—yet,—yet, who would say what might not happen? Till the deed should have been done, there would yet be a path open to the sweet easiness of innocence. When it should have been done, there would be a final adieu to innocence. There would be no return to the white way, no possibility of repentance! How could a man repent while he was still

holding the guilty prize which he had won? Or how could he give up the prize without delivering himself as a criminal to the law? But, nevertheless, he was resolved, and he determined that the deed should be done on the Tuesday night.

During the whole Tuesday he was thinking of it. Could he bring himself to believe that all that story of a soul tormented for its wickedness in everlasting fire was but an old woman's tale? If he could but bring himself to believe that! If he could do that, then could he master his qualms. And why not? Religious thoughts had hitherto but little troubled his life. The Church and her services had been nothing to him. He had lived neither with the fear nor with the love of God at his heart. He knew that, and was but little disposed to think that a line of conduct which had never been hitherto adopted by him would be embraced in his later life. He could not think of himself as being even

desirous to be religious. Why, then, should qualms afflict him?

That prayer which he was accustomed to repeat to himself as he went to rest was but a trick of his youth. It had come down to him from old, innocent days; and though it was seldom omitted, without a shiver, nevertheless it was repeated with contempt. In broad daylight, or when boon companions had been with him round the candles, blasphemy had never frightened him. But now,—now in his troubles, he remembered that there was a hell. He could not shake from himself the idea. For unrepented sin there was an eternity of torment which would last for ever! Such sin as this which he premeditated must remain unrepented, and there would be torment for him for ever. Nevertheless, he must do it. And, after all, did not many of the wise ones of the earth justify him in thinking that that threat was but an old woman's tale?

Tuesday night came,—the late hours of

Tuesday night,—the midnight hour at which he was sure that the women were in bed. and the will was taken out from its hiding-place. He had already trimmed the wick and placed the candle on an outspread newspaper, so that no fragment of the ash should fall where it might not be collected. He had walked round the room to make himself sure that no aperture might possibly be open. He put out the candle so as to see that no gleam of light from any source was making its way into the room, and then relighted it. The moment had come for the destruction of the document.

He read it all through yet again ;—why he knew not, but in truth craving some excuse for further delay. With what care the dying old man had written every word and completed every letter ! He sat there contemplating the old man's work, telling himself that it was for him to destroy it utterly by just a motion of his wrist. He turned round and trimmed the candle again, and

still sat there with the paper in his hand. Could it be that so great a result could come from so short an act? The damning of his own soul! Would it in truth be the giving up of his own soul to eternal punishment? God would know that he had not meant to steal the property! God would know that he did not wish to steal it now! God would know that he was doing this as the only means of escape from misery which others were plotting for him! God would know how cruelly he had been used! God would know the injustice with which the old man had treated him! Then came moments in which he almost taught himself to believe that in destroying the will he would be doing no more than an act of rough justice, and that God would certainly condemn no one to eternal punishment for a just act. But still, whenever he would turn round to the candle, his hand would refuse to raise the paper to the flame. When done, it could not be undone!

And whether those eternal flames should or should not get possession of him, there would be before him a life agonized by the dread of them. What could Mr. Cheekey do worse for him than that?

The Wednesday would at any rate do as well. Why rob himself of the comfort of one day during which his soul would not be irretrievably condemned? Now he might sleep. For this night, at any rate, he might sleep. He doubted whether he would ever sleep again after the doing of the deed. To be commonly wicked was nothing to him,—nothing to break through all those ordinary rules of life which parents teach their children and pastors their flocks, but as to which the world is so careless. To covet other men's goods, to speak evil of his neighbours, to run after his neighbour's wife if she came in his path, to steal a little in the ordinary way,—such as selling a lame horse or looking over an adversary's hand at whist, to swear to a lie, or

to ridicule the memory of his parents,—these peccadillos had never oppressed his soul. That not telling of the will had been burdensome to him only because of the danger of discovery. But to burn a will, and thereby clearly to steal 1500*l.* a year from his cousin! To commit felony! To do that for which he might be confined at Dartmoor all his life, with his hair cut, and dirty prison clothes, and hard food, and work to do! He thought it would be well to have another day of life in which he had not done the deed. He therefore put the will back into the book and went to his bed.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. APJOHN'S SUCCESS.

EARLY on the Wednesday morning Mr. Apjohn and Mr. Brodrick were on foot, and preparing for the performance of their very disagreeable day's work. Mr. Brodrick did not believe at all in the day's work, and in discussing the matter with Mr. Apjohn, after they had determined upon their line of action, made his mind known very clearly. To him it was simply apparent that if the will had fallen into the power of a dishonest person, and if the dishonest man could achieve his purpose by destroying it, the will would be destroyed. Of Cousin Henry he knew nothing. Cousin Henry might or might not be ordinarily

honest, as are other ordinary people. There might be no such will as that spoken of, or there might be a will accidentally hidden,—or the will might have been found and destroyed. But that they should be able to find a will, the hiding-place of which should be known to Cousin Henry, was to his thinking out of the question. The subtler intellect of the other lawyer appreciating the intricacies of a weak man's mind saw more than his companion. When he found that Mr. Brodrick did not agree with him, and perceived that the other attorney's mind was not speculative in such a matter as this, he ceased to try to persuade, and simply said that it was the duty of both of them to leave no stone unturned. And so they started.

"I'll take you about half a mile out of our way to show you Mr. Evans's gate," Mr. Apjohn said, after they had started. "His house is not above twenty minutes from Llanfeare, and should it be necessary to ask

his assistance, he will know all about it. You will find a policeman there ready to come back with you. But my impression is that Cousin Henry will not attempt to prevent any search which we may endeavour to make."

It was about ten when they reached the house, and, on being shown into the book-room, they found Cousin Henry at his breakfast. The front door was opened for them by Mrs. Griffith, the housekeeper; and when Mr. Apjohn expressed his desire to see Mr. Jones, she made no difficulty in admitting him at once. It was a part of the misery of Cousin Henry's position that everybody around him and near to him was against him. Mrs. Griffith was aware that it was the purpose of Mr. Apjohn to turn her present master out of Llanfeare if possible, and she was quite willing to aid him by any means in her power. Therefore, she gave her master no notice of the arrival of the two strangers, but ushered them into the room at once.

Cousin Henry's breakfast was frugal. All his meals had been frugal since he had become owner of Llanfeare. It was not that he did not like nice eating as well as another, but that he was too much afraid of his own servants to make known his own tastes. And then the general discomforts of his position had been too great to admit of relief from delicate dishes. There was the tea-pot on the table, and the solitary cup, and the bread and butter, and the nearly naked bone of a cold joint of mutton. And the things were not set after the fashion of a well-to-do gentleman's table, but were put on as they might be in a third-rate London lodging, with a tumbled tablecloth, and dishes, plates, and cups all unlike each other.

"Mr. Jones," said the attorney from Carmarthen, "this is your uncle, Mr. Brodrick, from Hereford." Then the two men who were so nearly connected, but had never known each other, shook hands. "Of

course, this matter," continued Mr. Apjohn, "is of great moment, and Mr. Brodrick has come over to look after his daughter's interests."

"I am very glad to see my uncle," said Cousin Henry, turning his eye involuntarily towards the shelf on which the volume of sermons was resting. "I am afraid I can't offer you much in the way of breakfast."

"We breakfasted before we left Carmarthen," said Mr. Apjohn. "If you do not mind going on, we will talk to you whilst you are eating." Cousin Henry said that he did not mind going on, but found it impossible to eat a morsel. That which he did, and that which he endured during that interview, he had to do and had to endure fasting. "I had better tell you at once," continued Mr. Apjohn, "what we want to do now."

"What is it you want to do now? I suppose I have got to go into the assizes all the same on Friday?"

"That depends. It is just possible that it should turn out to be unnecessary."

As he said this, he looked into Cousin Henry's face, and thought that he discerned something of satisfaction. When he made the suggestion, he understood well how great was the temptation offered in the prospect of not having to encounter Mr. Cheekey.

"Both Mr. Brodrick and I think it probable that your uncle's last will may yet be concealed somewhere in the house." Cousin Henry's eye, as this was said, again glanced up at the fatal shelf.

"When Mr. Apjohn says that in my name," said Mr. Brodrick, opening his mouth for the first time, "you must understand that I personally know nothing of the circumstances. I am guided in my opinion only by what he tells me."

"Exactly," said Mr. Apjohn. "As the father of the young lady who would be the heiress of Llanfeare if you were not the heir,

I have of course told him everything,—even down to the most secret surmises of my mind."

"All right," said Cousin Henry.

"My position," continued Mr. Apjohn, "is painful and very peculiar; but I find myself specially bound to act as the lawyer of the deceased, and to carry out whatever was in truth his last will and testament."

"I thought that was proved at Carmarthen," said Cousin Henry.

"No doubt. A will was proved,—a will that was very genuine if no subsequent will be found. But, as you have been told repeatedly, the proving of that will amounts to nothing if a subsequent one be forthcoming. The great question is this; Does a subsequent will exist?"

"How am I to know anything about it?"

"Nobody says you do."

"I suppose you wouldn't come here and

bring my uncle Brodrick down on me,—giving me no notice, but coming into my house just when I am at breakfast, without saying a word to any one,—unless you thought so. I don't see what right you have to be here at all!"

He was trying to pluck up his spirit in order that he might get rid of them. Why, oh! why had he not destroyed that document when, on the previous night, it had been brought out from its hiding-place, purposely in order that it might be burned?

"It is common, Mr. Jones, for one gentleman to call upon another when there is business to be done," said Mr. Apjohn.

"But not common to come to a gentleman's house and accuse him of making away with a will."

"Nobody has done that," said Mr. Brodrick.

"It is very like it."

"Will you allow us to search again? Two

of my clerks will be here just now, and will go through the house with us, if you will permit it."

Cousin Henry sat staring at them. Not long ago he had himself asked one of Mr. Apjohn's clerks why they did not search again. But then the framing of his thoughts had been different. At that moment he had been desirous of surrendering Llanfeare altogether, so that he might also get rid of Mr. Cheekey. Now he had reached a bolder purpose. Now he was resolved to destroy the will, enjoy the property, and face the barrister. An idea came across his mind that they would hardly insist upon searching instantly if he refused. A petition to that effect had already been made, and a petition implies the power of refusal on the part of him petitioned.

"Where do you want to look?" he asked.

Upon this Mr. Brodrick allowed his eyes to wander round the room. And Cousin Henry's eyes followed those of his uncle, which

seemed to him to settle themselves exactly upon the one shelf.

"To search the house generally; your uncle's bed-room, for instance," said Mr. Apjohn.

"Oh, yes; you can go there." This he said with an ill-formed, crude idea which sprang to his mind at the moment. If they would ascend to the bed-room, then he could seize the will when left alone and destroy it instantly,—eat it bit by bit if it were necessary,—go with it out of the house and reduce it utterly to nothing before he returned. He was still a free agent, and could go and come as he pleased. "Oh, yes; you can go there."

But this was not at all the scheme which had really formed itself in Mr. Apjohn's brain. "Or perhaps we might begin here," he said. "There are my two clerks just arrived in the fly."

Cousin Henry became first red and then

pale, and he endeavoured to see in what direction Mr. Brodrick had fixed his eye. Mr. Apjohn himself had not as yet looked anywhere round the books. He had sat close at the table, with his gaze fixed on Cousin Henry's face, as Cousin Henry had been well aware. If they began to search in the room, they would certainly find the document. Of that he was quite sure. Not a book would be left without having been made to disclose all that it might contain between its leaves. If there was any chance left to him, it must be seized now,—now at this very moment. Suddenly the possession of Llanfeare was endeared to him by a thousand charms. Suddenly all fear of eternal punishment passed away from his thoughts. Suddenly he was permeated by a feeling of contrition for his own weakness in having left the document unharmed. Suddenly he was brave against Mr. Cheekey, as would be a tiger against a lion. Suddenly there arose in his breast a

great desire to save the will even yet from the hands of these Philistines.

"This is my private room," he said. "When I am eating my breakfast I cannot let you disturb me like that."

"In a matter such as this you wouldn't think of your own comfort!" said Mr. Apjohn severely. "Comfort, indeed! What comfort can you have while the idea is present to you that this house in which you live may possibly be the property of your cousin?"

"It's very little comfort you've left me among you."

"Face it out, then, like a man; and when you have allowed us to do all that we can on her behalf, then enjoy your own, and talk of comfort. Shall I have the men in and go on with the search as I propose?"

If they were to find it,—as certainly they would,—then surely they would not accuse him of having hidden it! He would be

enabled to act some show of surprise, and they would not dare to contradict him, even should they feel sure in their hearts that he had been aware of the concealment! There would be great relief! There would be an end of so many troubles! But then how weak he would have been,—to have had the prize altogether within his grasp and to have lost it! A burst of foul courage swelled in his heart, changing the very colour of his character for a time as he resolved that it should not be so. The men could not search there,—so he told himself,—without further authority than that which Mr. Apjohn could give them. "I won't be treated in this way!" he said.

"In what way do you mean, Mr. Jones?"

"I won't have my house searched as though I were a swindler and a thief. Can you go into any man's house and search it just as you please, merely because you are an attorney?"

"You told my man the other day," said Mr. Apjohn, "that we might renew the search if we pleased."

"So you may; but you must get an order first from somebody. You are nobody."

"You are quite right," said Mr. Apjohn, who was not at all disposed to be angry in regard to any observation offered personally to himself. "But surely it would be better for you that this should be done privately. Of course we can have a search-warrant if it be necessary; but then there must be a policeman to carry it out."

"What do I care for policemen?" said Cousin Henry. "It is you who have treated me badly from first to last. I will do nothing further at your bidding."

Mr. Apjohn looked at Mr. Brodrick, and Mr. Brodrick looked at Mr. Apjohn. The strange attorney would do nothing without directions from the other, and the

attorney who was more at home was for a few moments a little in doubt. He got up from his chair, and walked about the room, while Cousin Henry, standing also, watched every movement which he made. Cousin Henry took his place at the further end of the table from the fire, about six feet from the spot on which all his thoughts were intent. There he stood, ready for action while the attorney walked up and down the room meditating what it would be best that he should do next. As he walked he seem to carry his nose in the air, with a gait different from what was usual to him. Cousin Henry had already learned something of the man's ways, and was aware that his manner was at present strange. Mr. Apjohn was in truth looking along the rows of the books. In old days he had often been in that room, and had read many of the titles as given on the backs. He knew the nature of many of the books collected there, and was aware that but very few of them had ever

been moved from their places in the old Squire's time for any purpose of use. He did not wish to stand and inspect them,—not as yet. He walked on as though collecting his thoughts, and as he walked he endeavoured to fix on some long set of sermons. He had in his mind some glimmering of a remembrance that there was such a set of books in the room. "You might as well let us do as we propose," he said.

"Certainly not. To tell you the truth, I wish you would go away, and leave me."

"Mr. Cheekey will hear all about it, and how will you be able to answer Mr. Cheekey?"

"I don't care about Mr. Cheekey. Who is to tell Mr. Cheekey? Will you tell him?"

"I cannot take your part, you know, if you behave like this."

As he spoke, Mr. Apjohn had stopped his walk, and was standing with his back close

to the book-shelves, with the back of his head almost touching the set of Jeremy Taylor's works. There were ten volumes of them, and he was standing exactly in front of them. Cousin Henry was just in front of him, doubting whether his enemy's position had not been chosen altogether by accident, but still trembling at the near approach. He was prepared for a spring if it was necessary. Anything should be hazarded now, so that discovery might be avoided. Mr. Brodrick was still seated in the chair which he had at first occupied, waiting till that order should be given to him to go for the magistrate's warrant.

Mr. Apjohn's eye had caught the author's name on the back of the book, and he remembered at once that he had seen the volume,—a volume with Jeremy Taylor's name on the back of it,—lying on the old man's table. "Jeremy Taylor's Works. Sermons." He remembered the volume. That had been a long time ago,—six months ago; but the old

man might probably take a long time over so heavy a book. "You will let me look at some of these," he said, pointing with his thumb over his back.

"You shall not touch a book without a regular order," said Cousin Henry.

Mr. Apjohn fixed the man's eye for a moment. He was the smaller man of the two, and much the elder; but he was wiry, well set, and strong. The other was soft, and unused to much bodily exercise. There could be no doubt as to which would have the best of it in a personal struggle. Very quickly he turned round and got his hand on one of the set, but not on the right one. Cousin Henry dashed at him, and in the struggle the book fell to the ground. Then the attorney seized him by the throat, and dragged him forcibly back to the table. "Take them all out one by one, and shake them," he said to the other attorney,—"that set like the one on the floor. I'll hold him while you do it."

Mr. Brodrick did as he was told, and, one by one, beginning from the last volume, he shook them all till he came to volume 4. Out of that fell the document.

"Is it the will?" shouted Mr. Apjohn, with hardly breath enough to utter the words.

Mr. Brodrick, with a lawyer's cautious hands, undid the folds, and examined the document. "It certainly is a will," he said,—"and is signed by my brother-in-law "

CHAPTER X.

HOW COUSIN HENRY WAS LET OFF EASILY.

It was a moment of great triumph and of utter dismay,—of triumph to Mr. Apjohn, and of dismay to Cousin Henry. The two men at this moment,—as Mr. Brodrick was looking at the papers,—were struggling together upon the ground. Cousin Henry, in his last frantic efforts, had striven to escape from the grasp of his enemy so as to seize the will, not remembering that by seizing it now he could retrieve nothing. Mr. Apjohn had been equally determined that ample time should be allowed to Mr. Brodrick to secure any document that might be found, and, with the pugnacity which the state of fighting always produces, had held on

to his prey with a firm grip. Now for the one man there remained nothing but dismay; for the other was the full enjoyment of the triumph produced by his own sagacity. "Here is the date," said Mr. Brodrick, who had retreated with the paper to the furthest corner of the room. "It is undoubtedly my brother-in-law's last will and testament, and, as far as I can see at a glance, it is altogether regular."

"You dog!" exclaimed Mr. Apjohn, spurning Cousin Henry away from him. "You wretched, thieving miscreant!" Then he got up on to his legs and began to adjust himself, setting his cravat right, and smoothing his hair with his hands. "The brute has knocked the breath out of me," he said. "But only to think that we should catch him after such a fashion as this!" There was a note of triumph in his voice which he found it impossible to repress. He was thoroughly proud of his achievement. It was a grand thing to him that Isabel Brodrick should at last get the

property which he had so long been anxious to secure for her; but at the present moment it was a grander thing to have hit the exact spot in which the document had been hidden by sheer force of intelligence.

What little power of fighting there had ever been in Cousin Henry had now been altogether knocked out of him. He attempted no further struggle, uttered no denial, nor did he make any answer to the words of abuse which Mr. Apjohn had heaped on his head. He too raised himself from the floor, slowly collecting his limbs together, and seated himself in the chair nearest at hand, hiding his face with his hand.

"That is the most wonderful thing that ever came within my experience," said Mr. Brodrick.

"That the man should have hidden the will?" asked Mr. Apjohn.

"Why do you say I hid it?" moaned Cousin Henry.

"You reptile!" exclaimed Mr. Apjohn.

"Not that he should have hidden it," said the Hereford attorney, "but that you should have found it, and found it without any search; —that you should have traced it down to the very book in which the old man must have left it!"

"Yes," said Cousin Henry. "He left it there. I did not hide it."

"Do you mean," said Mr. Apjohn, turning upon him with all the severity of which he was capable, "do you mean to say that during all this time you have not known that the will was there?" The wretched man opened his mouth and essayed to speak, but not a word came. "Do you mean to tell us that when you refused us just now permission to search this room, though you were willing enough that we should search elsewhere, you were not acquainted with the hiding-place? When I asked you in my office the other day whether you knew where the will was hidden,

and you wouldn't answer me for very fear, though you were glib enough in swearing that you had not hidden it yourself, then you knew nothing about the book and its enclosure? When you told Mr. Griffith down at Coed that you had something to divulge, were you not then almost driven to tell the truth by your dastardly cowardice as to this threatened trial? And did you not fail again because you were afraid? You mean poltroon! Will you dare to say before us, now, that when we entered the room this morning you did not know what that book contained?" Cousin Henry once more opened his mouth, but no word came. "Answer me, sir, if you wish to escape any part of the punishment which you have deserved."

"You should not ask him to criminate himself," said Mr. Brodrick.

"No!" shrieked Cousin Henry; "no! he shouldn't ask a fellow to tell against himself. It isn't fair; is it, Uncle Brodrick?"

"If I hadn't made you tell against yourself

one way or another," said Mr. Apjohn, "the will would have been there still, and we should all have been in the dark. There are occasions in which the truth must be screwed out of a man. We have screwed it out of you, you miserable creature! Brodrick, let us look at the paper. I suppose it is all right." He was so elated by the ecstasy of his success that he hardly knew how to contain himself. There was no prospect to him of any profit in all this. It might, indeed, well be that all the expenses incurred, including the handsome honorarium which would still have to be paid to Mr. Cheekey, must come out of his own pocket. But the glory of the thing was too great to admit of any considerations such as those. For the last month his mind had been exercised with the question of this will, whether there was such a will or not, and, if so, where was its hiding-place? Now he had brought his month's labour, his month's speculation, and his month's anxiety to a

supreme success. In his present frame of mind it was nothing to him who might pay the bill. "As far as I can see," said Mr. Brodrick, "it is altogether in order."

"Let us look at it." Then Mr. Apjohn, stretching out his hand, took the document, and, seating himself in Cousin Henry's own chair at the breakfast-table, read it through carefully from beginning to end. It was wonderful,—the exactness with which the old Squire had copied, not only every word, but every stop and every want of a stop in the preceding will. "It is my own work, every morsel of it," said Mr. Apjohn, with thorough satisfaction. "Why on earth did he not burn the intermediate one which he made in this rascal's favour,"—then he indicated the rascal by a motion of his head—"and make it all straight in that way?"

"There are men who think that a will once made should never be destroyed," suggested Mr. Brodrick.

"I suppose it was something of that kind. He was a fine old fellow, but as obstinate as a mule. Well, what are we to do now?"

"My nephew will have to consult his lawyer whether he will wish to dispute this document or not."

"I do not want to dispute anything," said Cousin Henry, whining.

"Of course he will be allowed time to think of it," said Mr. Apjohn. "He is in possession now, and will have plenty of time. He will have to answer some rather difficult questions from Mr. Cheekey on Friday."

"Oh, no!" shouted the victim.

"I am afraid it must be 'oh, yes,' Mr. Jones! How are you to get out of it; eh? You are bound over to prosecute Mr. Evans, of the Herald, for defamation of character. Of course it will come out at the trial that we have found this document. Indeed, I shall be at no trouble to conceal the fact,—nor, I suppose, will be Mr. Brodrick. Why should we?"

"I thought you were acting as my lawyer."

"So I was,—and so I am,—and so I will. While you were supposed to be an honest man,—or, rather, while it was possible that it might be so supposed,—I told you what, as an honest man, you were bound to do. The Carmarthen Herald knew that you were not honest,—and said so. If you are prepared to go into the court and swear that you knew nothing of the existence of this document, that you were not aware that it was concealed in that book, that you did nothing to prevent us from looking for it this morning, I will carry on the case for you. If I am called into the witness-box against you, of course I must give my evidence for what it is worth;—and Mr. Brodrick must do the same."

"But it won't go on?" he asked.

"Not if you are prepared to admit that there was no libel in all that the newspaper said. If you agree that it was all true, then

you will have to pay the costs on both sides, and the indictment can be quashed. It will be a serious admission to make, but perhaps that won't signify, seeing what your position as to character will be."

"I think you are almost too hard upon him," said Mr. Brodrick.

"Am I? Can one be too hard on a man who has acted as he has done?"

"He is hard,—isn't he, Mr. Brodrick?"

"Hard! Why, yes;—I should think I am. I mean to be hard. I mean to go on trampling you to pieces till I see your cousin, Miss Brodrick, put into full possession of this estate. I don't mean to leave you a loop-hole of escape by any mercy. At the present moment you are Henry Jones, Esq., of Llanfeare, and will be so till you are put out by the hard hand of the law. You may turn round for anything I know, and say that this document is a forgery."

"No, no!"

"That Mr. Brodrick and I brought it here with us and put it in the book."

"I sha'n't say anything of the kind."

"Who did put it there?" Cousin Henry sobbed and groaned, but said nothing. "Who did put it there? If you want to soften our hearts to you in any degree, if you wish us to contrive some mode of escape for you, tell the truth. Who put the will into that book?"

"How am I to know?"

"You do know! Who put it there?"

"I suppose it was Uncle Indefer."

"And you had seen it there?" Again Cousin Henry sobbed and groaned.

"You should hardly ask him that," said Mr. Brodrick.

"Yes! If any good can be done for him, it must be by making him feel that he must help us by making our case easy for us. You had seen it there? Speak the word, and we will do all we can to let you off easily."

"Just by an accident," said he.

"You did see it, then?"

"Yes;—I chanced to see it."

"Yes; of course you did. And then the Devil went to work with you and prompted you to destroy it?" He paused as though asking a question, but to this question Cousin Henry found it impossible to make any answer. "But the Devil had not quite hold enough over you to make you do that? It was so;—was it not? There was a conscience with you?"

"Oh, yes."

"But the conscience was not strong enough to force you to give it up when you found it?" Cousin Henry now burst out into open tears. "That was about it, I suppose? If you can bring yourself to make a clean breast of it, it will be easier for you."

"May I go back to London at once?" he asked.

"Well; as to that, I think we had better take some little time for consideration. But I

think I may say that, if you will make our way easy for us, we will endeavour to make yours easy for you. You acknowledge this to be your uncle's will as far as you know?"

"Oh, yes."

"You acknowledge that Mr. Brodrick found it in this book which I now hold in my hand?"

"I acknowledge that."

"This is all that I will ask you to sign your name to. As for the rest, it is sufficient that you have confessed the truth to your uncle and to me. I will just write a few lines that you shall sign, and then we will go back to Carmarthen and do the best we can to prevent the trial for next Friday." Thereupon Mr. Apjohn rang the bell, and asked Mrs. Griffith to bring him paper and ink. With these he wrote a letter addressed to himself, which he invited Cousin Henry to sign as soon as he had read it aloud to him and to Mr. Brodrick. The letter contained simply the two admissions

above stated, and then went on to authorize Mr. Apjohn, as the writer's attorney, to withdraw the indictment against the proprietor of the Carmarthen Herald, "in consequence," as the letter said, "of the question as to the possession of Llanfeare having been settled now in an unexpected manner."

When the letter was completed, the two lawyers went away, and Cousin Henry was left to his own meditation. He sat there for a while, so astounded by the transaction of the morning as to be unable to collect his thoughts. All this that had agitated him so profoundly for the last month had been set at rest by the finding of the will. There was no longer any question as to what must be done. Everything had been done. He was again a London clerk, with a small sum of money besides his clerkship, and the security of lowliness into which to fall back! If only they would be silent;—if only it might be thought by his fellow-clerks in London that the will had been

found by them without any knowledge on his part,—then he would be satisfied. A terrible catastrophe had fallen upon him, but one which would not be without consolation if with the estate might be made to pass away from him all responsibilities and all accusations as to the estate. That terrible man had almost promised him that a way of retreat should be made easy to him. At any rate, he would not be cross-examined Mr. Cheekey. At any rate, he would not be brought to trial. There was almost a promise, too, that as little should be said as possible. There must, he supposed, be some legal form of abdication on his part, but he was willing to execute that as quickly as possible on the simple condition that he should be allowed to depart without being forced to speak further on the matter to any one in Wales. Not to have to see the tenants, not to have to say even a word of farewell to the servants, not to be carried into Carmarthen,—above all, not to face Mr. Cheekey and the

Court,—this was all he asked now from a kind Fate.

At about two Mrs. Griffith came into the room, ostensibly to take away the breakfast things. She had seen the triumphant face of Mr. Apjohn, and knew that some victory had been gained. But when she saw that the breakfast had not been touched, her heart became soft. The way to melt the heart of a Mrs. Griffith is to eat nothing. "Laws, Mr. Jones, you have not had a mouthful. Shall I do you a broil?" He assented to the broil, and ate it, when it was cooked, with a better appetite than he had enjoyed since his uncle's death. Gradually he came to feel that a great load had been taken from off his shoulders. The will was no longer hidden in the book. Nothing had been done of which he could not repent. There was no prospect of a life before him made horrid by one great sin. He could not be Squire of Llanfeare; nor would he be a felon,—a felon always in his own esteem.

Upon the whole, though he hardly admitted as much to himself, the man's condition had been improved by the transactions of the morning.

"You don't quite agree with all that I have done this morning," said Mr. Apjohn, as soon as the two lawyers were in the fly together.

"I am lost in admiration at the clearness of your insight."

"Ah! that comes of giving one's undivided thoughts to a matter. I have been turning it over in my mind till I have been able to see it all. It was odd, wasn't it, that I should have foretold to you all that happened, almost to the volume?"

"Quite to the volume!"

"Well, yes; to the volume of sermons. Your brother-in-law read nothing but sermons. But you thought I shouldn't have asked those questions."

"I don't like making a man criminate himself," said Mr. Brodrick.

"Nor do I,—if I mean to criminate him too.

My object is to let him off. But to enable us to do that we must know exactly what he knew and what he had done. Shall I tell you what occurred to me when you shook the will out of the book? How would it be if he declared that we had brought it with us? If he had been sharp enough for that, the very fact of our having gone to the book at once would have been evidence against us."

"He was not up to it."

"No, poor devil! I am inclined to think that he has got as bad as he deserves. He might have been so much worse. We owe him ever so much for not destroying the will. His cousin will have to give him the 4000*l.* which he was to have given her."

"Certainly, certainly."

"He has been hardly used, you know, by his uncle; and, upon my word, he has had a bad time of it for the last month. I wouldn't have been hated and insulted as he has been by those people up there,—not for all Llan-

feare twice over. I think we've quenched him now, so that he'll run smooth. If so, we'll let him off easily. If I had treated him less hardly just now, he might have gathered courage and turned upon us. Then it would have been necessary to crush him altogether. I was thinking all through how we might let him off easiest."

CHAPTER XI.

ISABEL'S PETITION.

THE news was soon all about Carmarthen. A new will had been found, in accordance with which Miss Brodrick was to become owner of Llanfeare, and,—which was of more importance to Carmarthen at the present moment, —there was to be no trial! The story, as told publicly, was as follows;—Mr. Apjohn, by his sagacity, had found the will. It had been concealed in a volume of sermons, and Mr. Apjohn, remembering suddenly that the old man had been reading these sermons shortly before his death, had gone at once to the book. There the will had been discovered, which had at once been admitted to be a true and formal

document by the unhappy pseudo-proprietor. Henry Jones had acknowledged his cousin to be the heiress, and under these circumstances had conceived it to be useless to go on with the trial. Such was the story told, and Mr. Apjohn, fully aware that the story went very lame on one leg, did his best to remedy the default by explaining that it would be unreasonable to expect that a man should come into court and undergo an examination by Mr. Cheekey just when he had lost a fine property.

"Of course I know all that," said Mr. Apjohn, when the editor of the paper remarked to him that the libel, if a libel, would be just as much a libel whether Mr. Henry Jones were or were not the owner of Llanfeare. "Of course I know all that; but you are hardly to expect that a man is to come and assert himself amidst a cloud of difficulties when he has just undergone such a misfortune as that! You have had your fling, and are not to be punished for it. That ought to satisfy you."

"And who'll pay all the expenses?" asked Mr. Evans.

"Well," said Mr. Apjohn, scratching his head; "you, of course, will have to pay nothing. Geary will settle all that with me. That poor devil at Llanfeare ought to pay."

"He won't have the money."

"I, at any rate, will make it all right with Geary; so that needn't trouble you."

This question as to the expense was much discussed by others in Carmarthen. Who in truth would pay the complicated lawyers' bill which must have been occasioned, including all these flys out to Llanfeare? In spite of Mr. Apjohn's good-natured explanations, the public of Carmarthen was quite convinced that Henry Jones had in truth hidden the will. If so, he ought not only to be made to pay for everything, but be sent to prison also and tried for felony. The opinion concerning Cousin Henry in

Carmarthen on the Thursday and Friday was very severe indeed. Had he shown himself in the town, he would almost have been pulled in pieces. To kill him and to sell his carcase for what it might fetch towards lessening the expenses which he had incurred would not be too bad for him. Mr. Apjohn was, of course, the hero of the hour, and, as far as Carmarthen could see, Mr. Apjohn would have to pay the bill. All this, spoken as it was by many mouths, reached Mr. Brodrick's ears, and induced him to say a word or two to Mr. Apjohn.

"This affair," said he, "will of course become a charge upon the property?"

"What affair?"

"This trial which is not to take place, and the rest of it."

"The trial will have nothing to do with the estate," said Mr. Apjohn.

"It has everything to do with it. I only mention it now to let you know that, as Isabel's

father, I shall make it my business to look after that."

"The truth is, Brodrick," said the Carmarthen attorney, with that gleam of triumph in his eye which had been so often seen there since the will had tumbled out of the volume of sermons in the book-room, "the whole of this matter has been such a pleasure to me that I don't care a straw about the costs. If I paid for it all from beginning to end out of my own pocket, I should have had my whack for my money. Perhaps Miss Isabel will recompense me by letting me make her will some day."

Such were the feelings and such were the words spoken at Carmarthen; and it need only be said further, in regard to Carmarthen, that the operations necessary for proving the later will and annulling the former one, for dispossessing Cousin Henry and for putting Isabel into the full fruition of all her honours, went on as quickly as it could be effected by

the concentrated energy of Mr. Apjohn and all his clerks.

Cousin Henry, to whom we may be now allowed to bid farewell, was permitted to remain within the seclusion of the house at Llanfeare till his signature had been obtained to the last necessary document. No one spoke a word to him; no one came to see him. If there were intruders about the place anxious to catch a glimpse of the pseudo-Squire, they were disappointed.

Mrs. Griffith, under the attorney's instructions, was more courteous to him than she had been when he was her master. She endeavoured to get him things nice to eat, trying to console him by titbits. None of the tenants appeared before him, nor was there a rough word spoken to him, even by young Cantor.

In all this Cousin Henry did feel some consolation, and was greatly comforted when he heard from the office in London that his

stool at the desk was still kept open for him.

The Carmarthen Herald, in its final allusion to the state of things at Llanfeare, simply declared that the proper will had been found at last, and that Miss Isabel Brodrick was to be restored to her rights. Guided by this statement, the directors in London were contented to regard their clerk as having been unfortunate rather than guilty.

For the man himself, the reader, it is hoped, will feel some compassion. He had been dragged away from London by false hopes. After so great an injury as that inflicted on him by the last change in the Squire's purpose it was hardly unnatural that the idea of retaliation should present itself to him when the opportunity came in his way. Not to do that which justice demands is so much easier to the conscience than to commit a deed which is palpably fraudulent! At the last his conscience saved him, and Mr. Apjohn will perhaps

be thought to have been right in declaring that much was due to him in that he had not destroyed the will. His forbearance was recompensed fully.

As soon as the money could be raised on the property, the full sum of 4000*l.* was paid to him, that having been the amount with which the Squire had intended to burden the property on behalf of his niece when he was minded to put her out of the inheritance.

It may be added that, notorious as the whole affair was at Carmarthen, but little of Cousin Henry's wicked doings were known up in London.

We must now go back to Hereford. By agreement between the two lawyers, no tidings of her good fortune were at once sent to Isabel. "There is so many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," said Mr. Apjohn to her uncle. But early in the following week Mr. Brodrick himself took the news home with him.

"My dear," he said to her as soon as he found himself alone with her,—having given her intimation that an announcement of great importance was to be made to her,—"it turns out that after all your Uncle Indefer did make another will."

"I was always quite sure of that, papa."

"How were you sure?"

"He told me so, papa."

"He told you so! I never heard that before."

"He did,—when he was dying. What was the use of talking of it? But has it been found?"

"It was concealed within a book in the library. As soon as the necessary deeds can be executed Llanfeare will be your own. It is precisely word for word the same as that which he had made before he sent for your Cousin Henry."

"Then Henry has not destroyed it?"

"No, he did not destroy it."

"Nor hid it where we could not find it?"

"Nor did he hide it."

"Oh, how I have wronged him;—how I have injured him!"

"About that we need say nothing, Isabel. You have not injured him. But we may let all that pass away. The fact remains that you are the heiress of Llanfeare."

Of course he did by degrees explain to her all the circumstances,—how the will had been found and not revealed, and how far Cousin Henry had sinned in the matter; but it was agreed between them that no further evil should be said in the family as to their unfortunate relative. The great injury which he might have done to them he had abstained from doing.

"Papa," she said to her father when they were again together alone that same evening, "you must tell all this to Mr. Owen. You must tell him everything, just as you have told me."

"Certainly, my dear, if you wish it."

"I do wish it."

"Why should you not have the pleasure of telling him yourself?"

"It would not be a pleasure, and therefore I will get you to do it. My pleasure, if there be any pleasure in it, must come afterwards. I want him to know it before I see him myself."

"He will be sure to have some stupid notion," said her father, smiling.

"I want him to have his notion, whether it be stupid or otherwise, before I see him. If you do not mind, papa, going to him as soon as possible, I shall be obliged to you."

Isabel, when she found herself alone, had her triumph also. She was far from being dead to the delights of her inheritance. There had been a period in her life in which she had regarded it as her certain destiny to be the possessor of Llanfeare, and she had been proud of the promised position. The tenants had known her as the future owner of the acres

which they cultivated, and had entertained for her and shown to her much genuine love. She had made herself acquainted with every homestead, landmark, and field about the place. She had learnt the wants of the poor, and the requirements of the little school. Everything at Llanfeare had had an interest for her. Then had come that sudden change in her uncle's feelings,—that new idea of duty,—and she had borne it like a heroine. Not only had she never said a word of reproach to him, but she had sworn to herself that even in her own heart she would throw no blame upon him. A great blow had come upon her, but she had taken it as though it had come from the hand of the Almighty,—as it might have been had she lost her eyesight, or been struck with palsy. She promised herself that it should be so, and she had had strength to be as good as her word. She had roused herself instantly from the effect of the blow, and, after a day of consideration, had been as capable as ever to

do the work of her life. Then had come her uncle's last sickness, those spoken but doubtful words, her uncle's death, and that conviction that her cousin was a felon. Then she had been unhappy, and had found it difficult to stand up bravely against misfortune. Added to this had been her stepmother's taunts and her father's distress at the resolution she had taken. The home to which she had returned had been thoroughly unhappy to her. And there had been her stern purpose not to give her hand to the man who loved her and whom she so dearly loved! She was sure of her purpose, and yet she was altogether discontented with herself. She was sure that she would hold by her purpose, and yet she feared that her purpose was wrong. She had refused the man when she was rich, and her pride would not let her go to him now that she was poor. She was sure of her purpose,—but yet she almost knew that her pride was wrong.

But now there would be a triumph. Her eyes gleamed brightly as she thought of the way in which she would achieve her triumph. Her eyes gleamed very brighty as she felt sure within her own bosom that she would succeed. Yes: he would, no doubt, have some stupid notion, as her father said. But she would overcome his stupidity. She, as a woman, could be stronger than he as a man. He had almost ridiculed her obstinacy, swearing that he would certainly overcome it. There should be no ridicule on her part, but she would certainly overcome his obstinacy.

For a day or two Mr. Owen was not seen. She heard from her father that the tidings had been told to her lover, but she heard no more. Mr. Owen did not show himself at the house; and she, indeed, hardly expected that he should do so. Her stepmother suddenly became gracious,—having no difficulty in explaining that she did so because of the altered position of things.

"My dearest Isabel, it does make such a difference!" she said; "you will be a rich lady, and will never have to think about the price of shoes." The sisters were equally plain-spoken, and were almost awe-struck in their admiration.

Three or four days after the return of Mr. Brodrick, Isabel took her bonnet and shawl, and walked away all alone to Mr. Owen's lodgings. She knew his habits, and was aware that he was generally to be found at home for an hour before his dinner. It was no time, she said to herself, to stand upon little punctilios. There had been too much between them to let there be any question of a girl going after her lover. She was going after her lover, and she didn't care who knew it. Nevertheless, there was a blush beneath her veil as she asked at the door whether Mr. Owen was at home. Mr. Owen was at home, and she was shown at once into his parlour.

"William," she said;—throughout their

intimacy she had never called him William before;—"you have heard my news?"

"Yes," he said, "I have heard it;"—very seriously, with none of that provoking smile with which he had hitherto responded to all her assertions.

"And you have not come to congratulate me?"

"I should have done so. I do own that I have been wrong."

"Wrong;—very wrong! How was I to have any of the enjoyment of my restored rights unless you came to enjoy them with me?"

"They can be nothing to me, Isabel."

"They shall be everything to you, sir."

"No, my dear."

"They are to be everything to me, and they can be nothing to me without you. You know that, I suppose?" Then she waited for his reply. "You know that, do you not? You know what I feel about that,

I say. Why do you not tell me? Have you any doubt?"

"Things have been unkind to us, Isabel, and have separated us."

"Nothing shall separate us." Then she paused for a moment. She had thought of it all, and now had to pause before she could execute her purpose. She had got her plan ready, but it required some courage, some steadying of herself to the work before she could do it. Then she came close to him,—close up to him, looking into his face as he stood over her, not moving his feet, but almost retreating with his body from her close presence. "William," she said, "take me in your arms and kiss me. How often have you asked me during the last month! Now I have come for it."

He paused a moment as though it were possible to refuse, as though his collected thoughts and settled courage might enable him so to outrage her in her petition. Then he broke

down, and took her in his arms, and pressed her to his bosom, and kissed her lips, and her forehead, and her cheeks,—while she, having once achieved her purpose, attempted in vain to escape from his long embrace.

"Now I shall be your wife," she said at last, when her breath had returned to her.

"It should not be so."

"Not after that? Will you dare to say so to me,—after that? You could never hold up your head again. Say that you are happy. Tell me that you are happy. Do you think that I can be happy unless you are happy with me?" Of course he gave her all the assurances that were needed, and made it quite unnecessary that she should renew her prayer.

"And I beg, Mr. Owen, that for the future you will come to me, and not make me come to you." This she said as she was taking her leave. "It was very disagreeable, and very wrong, and will be talked about ever so much. Nothing but my determination to have my

own way could have made me do it." Of course he promised her that there should be no occasion for her again to put herself to the same inconvenience.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Isabel spent one pleasant week with her lover at Hereford, and then was summoned into Carmarthenshire. Mr. Apjohn came over at her father's invitation, and insisted on taking her back to Llanfeare.

"There are a thousand things to be done," he said, "and the sooner you begin to do them the better. Of course you must live at the old house, and you had better take up your habitation there for a while before this other change is made." The other change was of course the coming marriage, with the circumstances of which the lawyer had been made acquainted.

Then there arose other questions. Should her father go with her or should her lover? It was, however, at last decided that she should go alone as regarded her family, but under the care of Mr. Apjohn. It was she who had been known in the house, and she who had better now be seen there as her uncle's representative.

"You will have to be called Miss Jones," said the lawyer, "Miss Indefer Jones. There will be a form, for which we shall have to pay, I am afraid; but we had better take the name at once. You will have to undergo a variety of changes in signing your name. You will become first Miss Isabel Brodrick Indefer Jones, then Mrs. William Owen, then, when he shall have gone through the proper changes, Mrs. William Owen Indefer Jones. As such I hope you may remain till you shall be known as the oldest inhabitant of Carmarthenshire."

Mr. Apjohn took her to Carmarthen, and

hence on to Llanfeare. At the station there, were many to meet her, so that her triumph, s she got into the carriage, was almost painful to her. When she heard the bells ring from the towers of the parish churches, she could hardly believe that the peals were intended to welcome her back to her old home. She was taken somewhat out of her way round by the creek and Coed, so that the little tinkling of her own parish church might not be lost upon her. If this return of hers to the estate was so important to others as to justify these signs, what must it be to her and how deep must be the convictions as to her own duties?

At the gate of Coed farmyard the carriage stopped, and the old farmer came out to say a few words to her.

"God bless you, Miss Isabel; this is a happy sight to see."

"This is so kind of you, Mr. Griffith."

"We've had a bad time of it, Miss Isabel;

—not that we wished to quarrel with your dear uncle's judgment, or that we had a right to say much against the poor gentleman who has gone;—but we expected you, and it went against the grain with us to have our expectations disappointed. We shall always look up to you, miss; but, at the same time, I wish you joy with all my heart of the new landlord you're going to set over us. Of course that was to be expected, but you'll be here with us all the time." Isabel, while the tears ran down her cheeks, could only press the old man's hand at parting.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Apjohn, as they went on to the house, "he has only said just what we've all been feeling. Of course it has been stronger with the tenants and servants than with others. But all round the country it has been the same. A man, if an estate belong to himself personally, can do what he likes with it, as he can with the half-crowns in his pocket; but where land is concerned, feelings

grow up which should not be treated rudely. In one sense Llanfeare belonged to your uncle to do what he liked with it, but in another sense he shared it only with those around him; and when he was induced by a theory which he did not himself quite understand to bring your cousin Henry down among these people, he outraged their best convictions."

"He meant to do his duty, Mr. Apjohn."

"Certainly; but he mistook it. He did not understand the root of that idea of a male heir. The object has been to keep the old family, and the old adherences, and the old acres together. England owes much to the manner in which this has been done, and the custom as to a male heir has availed much in the doing of it. But in this case, in sticking to the custom, he would have lost the spirit, and, as far as he was concerned, would have gone against the practice which he wished to perpetuate. There, my dear, is a sermon for you, of

which, I dare say, you do not understand a word."

"I understand every syllable of it, Mr. Apjohn," she answered.

They soon arrived at the house, and there they found not only Mrs. Griffith and the old cook, who had never left the premises, but the old butler also, who had taken himself off in disgust at Cousin Henry's character, but had now returned as though there had been no break in his continuous service. They received her with triumphant clamours of welcome. To them the coming of Cousin Henry, and the death of the old Squire, and then the departure of their young mistress, had been as though the whole world had come to an end for them. To serve was their only ambition,—to serve and to be made comfortable while they were serving; but to serve Cousin Henry was to them altogether ignominious. The old Squire had done something which, though they acknowledged it to be no worse on his part

than a mistake, had to them been cruelly severe. Suddenly to be told that they were servants to such a one as Cousin Henry,—servants to such a man without any contract or agreement on their part;—to be handed over like the chairs and tables to a disreputable clerk from London, whom in their hearts they regarded as very much inferior to themselves! And they, too, like Mr. Griffith and the tenants, had been taught to look for the future reign of Queen Isabel as a thing of course. In that there would have been an implied contract,—an understanding on their part that they had been consulted and had agreed to this destination of themselves. But Cousin Henry! Now this gross evil to themselves and to all around them had been remedied, and justice was done. They had all been strongly convinced that the Squire had made and had left behind him another will. The butler had been quite certain that this had been destroyed by Cousin Henry, and had sworn that he would

not stand behind the chair of a felon. The gardener had been equally violent, and had declined even to cut a cabbage for Cousin Henry's use. The women in the house had only suspected. They had felt sure that something was wrong, but had doubted between various theories. But now everything was right; now the proper owner had come; now the great troubles had been vanquished, and Llanfeare would once again be a fitting home for them.

"Oh, Miss Isabel! oh, Miss Isabel!" said Mrs. Griffith, absolutely sobbing at her young mistress's feet up in her bed-room; "I did say that it could never go on like that. I did use to think that the Lord Almighty would never let it go on like that! It couldn't be that Mr. Henry Jones was to remain always landlord of Llanfeare."

When she came downstairs and took her seat, as she did by chance, in the old arm-chair which her uncle had been used to occupy, Mr.

Apjohn preached to her another sermon, or rather sang a loud pæan of irrepressible delight.

"Now, my dear, I must go and leave you,—happily in your own house. You can hardly realize how great a joy this has been to me,—how great a joy it is."

"I know well how much we owe you."

"From the first moment in which he intimated to me his wish to make a change in his will, I became so unhappy about it as almost to lose my rest. I knew that I went beyond what I ought to have done in the things that I said to him, and he bore it kindly."

"He was always kind."

"But I couldn't turn him. I told him what I told you to-day on the road, but it had no effect on him. Well, I had nothing to do but to obey his orders. This I did most grudgingly. It was a heart-break to me, not only because of you, my dear, but for the sake of the property, and because I had heard something of your

cousin. Then came the rumour of this last will. He must have set about it as soon as you had left the house."

"He never told me that he was going to do it."

"He never told any one; that is quite certain. But it shows how his mind must have been at work. Perhaps what I said may have had some effect at last. Then I heard from the Cantors what they had been asked to do. I need not tell you all that I felt then. It would have been better for him to send for me."

"Oh, yes."

"So much better for that poor young man's sake." The poor young man was of course Cousin Henry. "But I could not interfere. I could only hear what I did hear,—and wait. Then the dear old man died!"

"I knew then that he had made it."

"You knew that he had thought that he had done it; but how is one to be sure of the

vacillating mind of an old dying man? When we searched for the one will and read the other, I was very sure that the Cantors had been called upon to witness his signature. Who could doubt as to that? But he who had so privately drawn out the deed might as privately destroy it. By degrees there grew upon me the conviction that he had not destroyed it; that it still existed,—or that your cousin had destroyed it. The latter I never quite believed. He was not the man to do it,—neither brave enough nor bad enough."

"I think not bad enough."

"Too small in his way altogether. And yet it was clear as the sun at noonday that he was troubled in his conscience. He shut himself up in his misery, not knowing how strong a tale his own unhappiness told against him. Why did he not rejoice in the glory of his position? Then I said to myself that he was conscious of insecurity."

"His condition must have been pitiable."

"Indeed, yes. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart. The contumely with which he was treated by all went to my heart even after I knew that he was misbehaving. I knew that he was misbehaving;—but how? It could only be by hiding the will, or by being conscious that it was hidden. Though he was a knave, he was not cunning. He failed utterly before the slightest cunning on the part of others. When I asked him whether he knew where it was hidden, he told a weak lie, but told the truth openly by the look of his eyes. He was like a little girl who pauses and blushes and confesses all the truth before she half murmurs her naughty fib. Who can be really angry with the child who lies after that unwilling fashion? I had to be severe upon him till all was made clear; but I pitied him from the bottom of my heart."

"You have been good to all of us."

"At last it became clear to me that your uncle had put it somewhere himself. Then

came a chance remembrance of the sermons he used to read, and by degrees the hiding-place was suggested to me. When at last he welcomed us to go and search in his uncle's bed-room, but forbade us to touch anything in the book-room,—then I was convinced. I had but to look along the shelves till I found the set, and I almost knew that we had got the prize. Your father has told you how he flew at me when I attempted to lift my hand to the books. The agony of the last chance gave him a moment of courage. Then your father shook the document out from among the leaves."

"That must have been a moment of triumph to you,"

"Yes;—it was. I did feel a little proud of my success. And I am proud as I see you sitting there, and feel that justice has been done."

"By your means!"

"That justice has been done, and that every one has his own again. I own to all the

litigious pugnacity of a lawyer. I live by such fighting, and I like it. But a case in which I do not believe crushes me. To have an injustice to get the better of, and then to trample it well under foot,—that is the triumph that I desire. It does not often happen to a lawyer to have had such a chance as this, and I fancy that it could not have come in the way of a man who would have enjoyed it more than I do." Then at last, after lingering about the house, he bade her farewell. "God bless you, and make you happy here,—you and your husband. If you will take my advice you will entail the property. You, no doubt, will have children, and will take care that in due course it shall go to the eldest boy. There can be no doubt as to the wisdom of that. But you see what terrible misery may be occasioned by not allowing those who are to come after you to know what it is they are to expect."

For a few weeks Isabel remained alone at Llanfeare, during which all the tenants came

to call upon her, as did many of the neighbouring gentry.

"I know'd it," said young Cantor, clenching his fist almost in her face. "I was that sure of it I couldn't hardly hold myself. To think of his leaving it in a book of sermons!"

Then, after the days were past during which it was thought well that she should remain at Llanfeare to give orders, and sign papers, and make herself by very contact with her own property its mistress and owner, her father came for her and took her back to Hereford. Then she had incumbent upon her the other duty of surrendering herself and all that she possessed to another. As any little interest which this tale may possess has come rather from the heroine's material interests than from her love,—as it has not been, so to say, a love story,—the reader need not follow the happy pair absolutely to the altar. But it may be said, in anticipation of the future, that in due time an eldest son was born, that Llanfeare

was entailed upon him and his son, and that he was so christened as to have his somewhat grandiloquent name inscribed as William Apjohn Owen Indefer Jones.

THE END.

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